Batman & Captain America
by JOHN BYRNE
with Patricia Mulvihill
MARVEL COMICS
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BATMAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA

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a Bchry Scan

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JOHN BYRNE

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Batman & Captain America

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Writer/Artist

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BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE

CAPTAIN AMERICA CREATED BY JOE SIMON AND JACK KIRBY

To Edmond Hamilton, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee and Dick Sprang,
with thanks for the introductions.
JB

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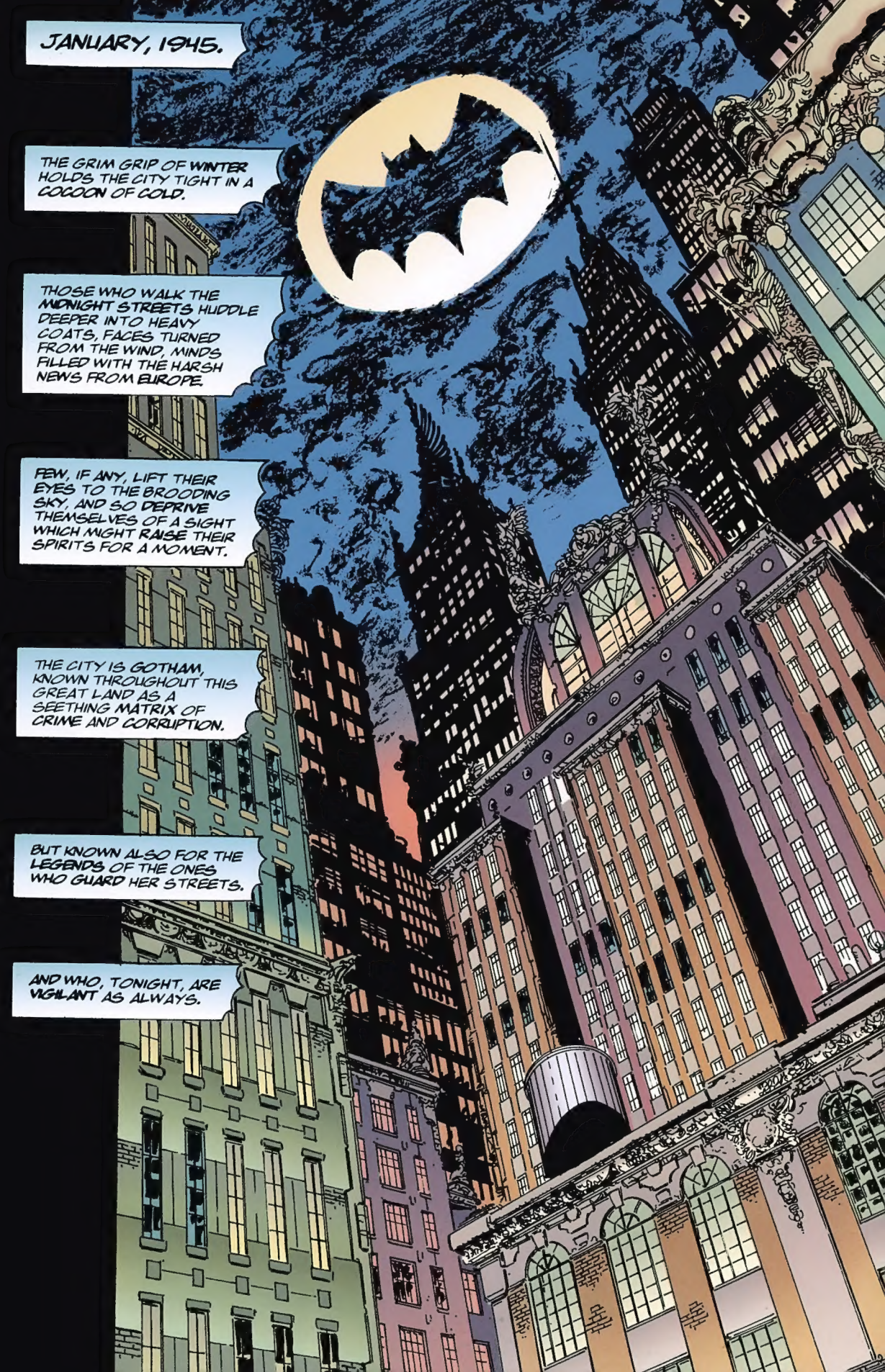

JANUARY, 1945.
THE GRIM GRIP OF WINTER HOLDS THE CITY TIGHT IN A COCOON OF COLD.
THOSE WHO WALK THE MIDNIGHT STREETS HUDDLE DEEPER INTO HEAVY COATS, FACES TURNED FROM THE WIND, MINDS FILLED WITH THE HARSH NEWS FROM EUROPE.
FEW, IF ANY, LIFT THEIR EYES TO THE BROODING SKY, AND SO DEPRIVE THEMSELVES OF A SIGHT WHICH MIGHT RAISE THEIR SPIRITS FOR A MOMENT.
THE CITY IS GOTHAM, KNOWN THROUGHOUT THIS GREAT LAND AS A SEETHING MATRIX OF CRIME AND CORRUPTION.
BUT KNOWN ALSO FOR THE LEGENDS OF THE ONES WHO GUARD HER STREETS.
AND WHO, TONIGHT, ARE VIGILANT AS ALWAYS.

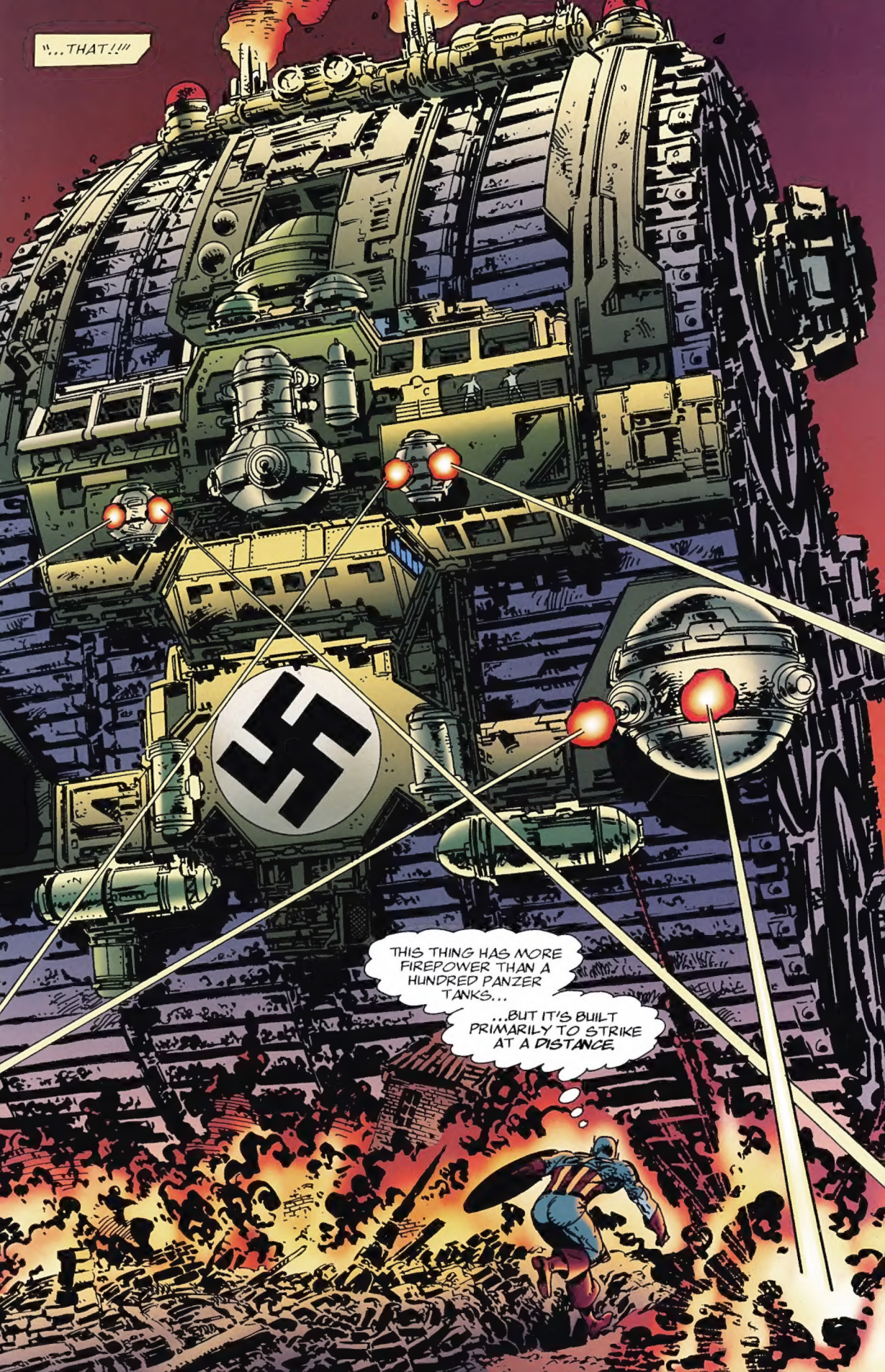
THE SOUND OF RUBBER TIRES ON SNOW-SLICKED PAVEMENT CUTS THE AIR WITH A BANSHEE WAIL.
EVEN THE MOST CALLOW TURN AT THE SOUND, EYES GROWING LARGE AT THE SIGHT THAT CONFRONTS THEM.
MOLDOFF'S
AND IF THIS GARISH SIGHT WERE NOT ALONE ENOUGH TO FREEZE THE BLOOD AND MAKE THE HEART BEAT FASTER...
...THAT WHICH FOLLOWS SURELY IS!
TOO CLOSE, MY POINTY-EARED FRIEND.
BUT THIS SHOULD SLOW YOU DOWN!
BLACK AS THE ICE ON THESE ALREADY TREACHEROUS STREETS, A SPRAY OF OIL JETS FROM THE FLEEING JOKERMOBILE.
THE SPEEDING POLICE VEHICLES ARE TRANSFORMED IN AN INSTANT INTO CAREENING DODGE-EM CARS.

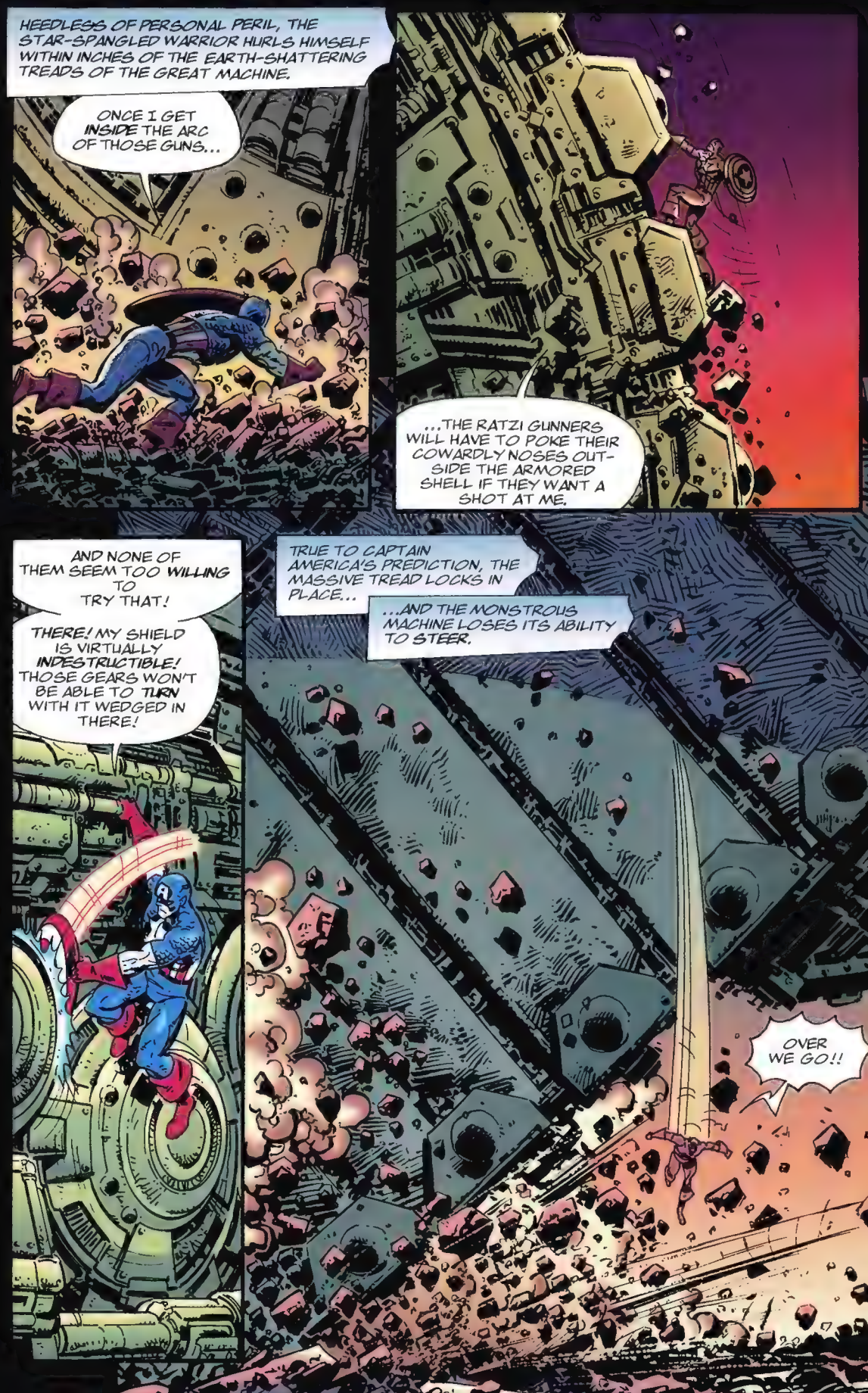
BUT, LEADING THE PURSUIT...
IT'S WORKING, BATMAN! THOSE STEEL BRUSHES ARE SWEEPING AWAY THE JOKER'S OIL SLICK!
THAT'S ONE TRICK BEATEN, ROBIN. BUT WE CAN COUNT ON THE JOKER TO HAVE A THOUSAND MORE BEFORE THE NIGHT IS OVER!
...THE BATMOBILE HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR JUST THIS CONTINGENCY.
THAT STREET DEAD-ENDS AT THE DOCKS!
WE'VE GOT HIM!
GOTHAM BAT 2
HE'S OUT-SMARTED HIM-SELF THIS TIME!
HE'S TRAPPED!
MAYBE.
BUT I'VE LEARNED FROM BITTER EXPERIENCE NEVER TO UNDERESTIMATE THE JOKER!

TA TA, BAT-CHUMPS!
SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS!
IT WAS ALL PART OF HIS PLAN!! WE NEVER HAD HIM TRAPPED FOR A SECOND!
AND HE'LL BE LONG GONE IN THE DARKNESS BEFORE WE CAN FIND A BOAT TO GET AFTER HIM.

AT LEAST HE LEFT US THE BIGGEST BREAK OF THE CASE! THE JOKERMOBILE HAS GOT TO BE CRAMMED WITH CLUES!
DON'T BE TOO SURE, OLD CHUM. THE JOKER IS A MAD-MAN, BUT HE IS NOT A PARTIC-ULARLY CARELESS MADMAN.
ALTHOUGH...
WHAT IS IT, BATMAN?
SOMETHING THAT ADDS A LAYER TO THIS CASE THAT I'D RATHER WASN'T THERE.
I THINK WE'D BETTER...
HEY... DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING TICKING?
GET DOWN!!
"THEY'RE FIRING AGAIN!!!"

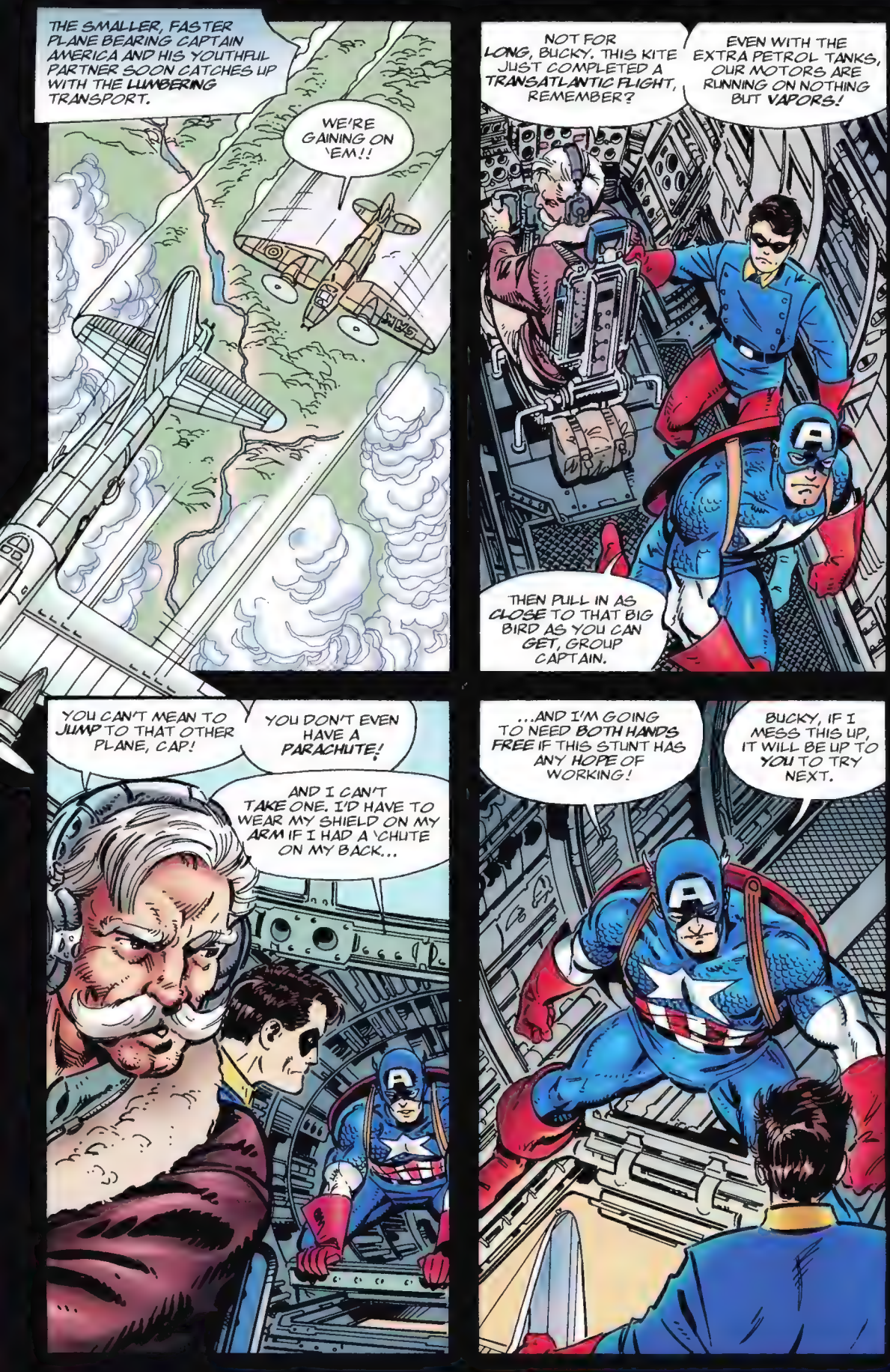
GET TO COVER!!
MOVE IT!!
EUROPE. A CONTINENT TORN AND BLOODY AFTER SIX LONG YEARS OF TOTAL WAR.
WAR THAT HAS SPAWNED ITS OWN BRAND OF HEROES.
THAT THING HAS ONLY ONE WEAKNESS.
I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO EXPLOIT IT!
CAP! NO! YOU'LL BE KILLED!
NOT IF I PLAY THIS HAND JUST RIGHT, ROCK.
AND THEY CALL ME A WILD MAN! LOOK AT HIM GO!
BIN READIN' ABOUT CAPTAIN AMERICA FOR YEARS! NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE HIM IN ACTION!
WELL, TAKE A GOOD LOOK, CUZ I DON'T THINK EVEN HE HAS MUCH OF A CHANCE AGAINST...

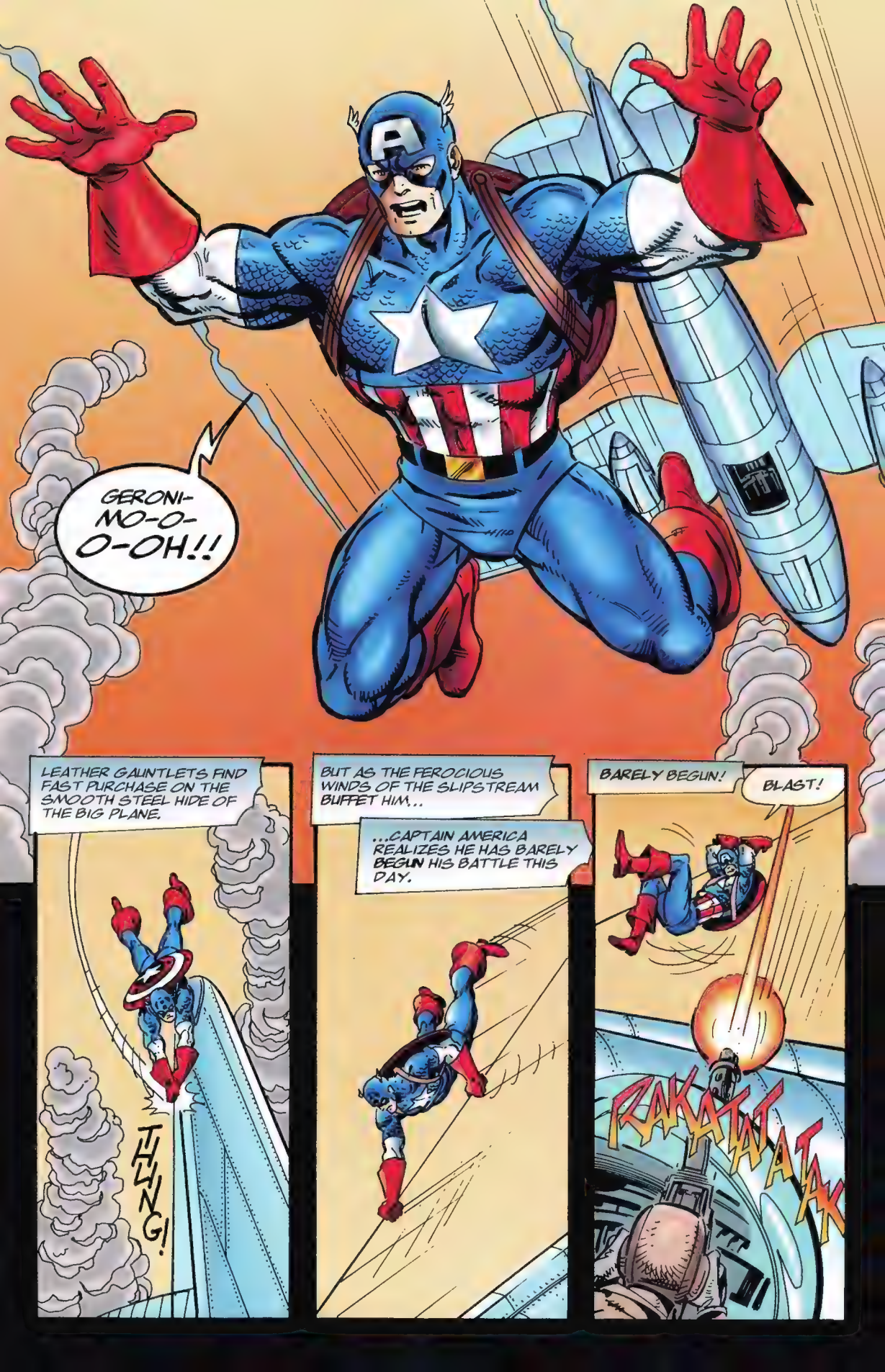

"...THAT!!"
THIS THING HAS MORE FIREPOWER THAN A HUNDRED PANZER TANKS...
...BUT IT'S BUILT PRIMARILY TO STRIKE AT A DISTANCE.

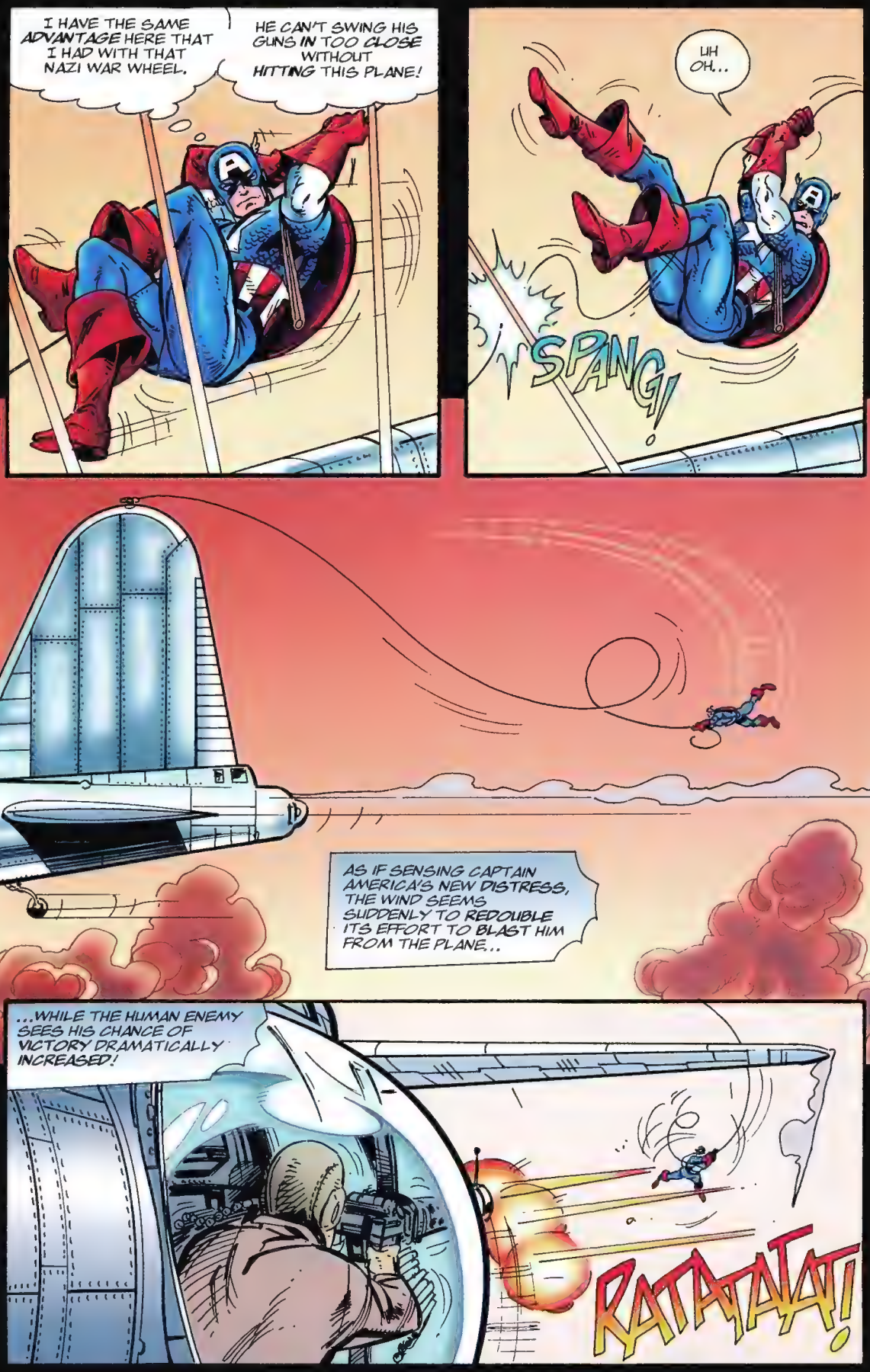

HEEDLESS OF PERSONAL PERIL, THE STAR-SPANGLED WARRIOR HURLS HIMSELF WITHIN INCHES OF THE EARTH-SHATTERING TREADS OF THE GREAT MACHINE.
ONCE I GET INSIDE THE ARC OF THOSE GUNS...
...THE RATZI GUNNERS WILL HAVE TO POKE THEIR COWARDLY NOSES OUTSIDE THE ARMORED SHELL IF THEY WANT A SHOT AT ME.
AND NONE OF THEM SEEM TOO WILLING TO TRY THAT!
THERE! MY SHIELD IS VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE! THOSE GEARS WON'T BE ABLE TO TURN WITH IT WEDGED IN THERE!
TRUE TO CAPTAIN AMERICA'S PREDICTION, THE MASSIVE TREAD LOCKS IN PLACE...
...AND THE MONSTROUS MACHINE LOSES ITS ABILITY TO STEER.
OVER WE GO!!

KA-THOOM
HANDS OVER YOUR HEADS, KRAUTS! DON'T TRY ANYTHING FUNNY!
KAMERADE! KAMERADE!
VE ZURRENDER!
THEY SEEM A LOT LESS EAGER TO CONQUER THE WORLD WITHOUT THEIR TOYS TO PROTECT THEM!
THAT WAS SMOOTH, CAP. AS SMOOTH A PIECE OF BUSINESS AS I'VE SEEN IN THIS MAN'S WAR!
CAP! CAP! IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM GZ!!*
*ARMY INTELLIGENCE - EDITOR
WHAT THE...?! BUCKY AND I HAVE BEEN ORDERED BACK STATESIDE! SOME KIND OF TOP SECRET MISSION. BUT THEY HAVE ALL THE AGENTS THEY NEED FOR THAT KIND OF STUFF!
MAYBE THEY DO.
BUT ME AN' YOU ARE JUST FOLLOWIN' ORDERS IN THIS WAR, CAP.
AND IF WE START QUESTIONING THOSE ORDERS, WHERE WILL WE BE?
YOU'RE RIGHT, ROCK. I'LL GO.
BUT I'M GLAD I HAD THIS CHANCE TO WORK WITH YOU AND THE MEN OF EASY COMPANY BEFORE THIS SHOW ENDED.

"IT'S MEN LIKE YOU WHO ARE THE REAL HEROES IN THIS WAR."
TWENTY HOURS LATER. GOTHAM MUNICIPAL AIRFIELD.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, PILOT?
SOMETHING BIG GOING ON, CAP.
"WE'VE BEEN ORDERED TO HOLD OUR POSITION UNTIL A PRIORITY TAKEOFF CLEARS THE FIELD."
"PRIORITY TAKEOFF"? WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON HERE? THE BIG BRASS WERE SO HOT TO GET US HERE, NOW THEY MAKE US WAIT??
NO WAY TO EVEN GUESS WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT, BUCKY...
...BUT JUST ON THE BASIS OF WHAT YOU SAY, I THINK WE CAN ASSUME IT'S IMPORTANT!
EMERGENCY!! EMERGENCY!!!
HOLY..!!! PILOT, GET AFTER THAT PLANE!!
PRIORITY FLIGHT HAS BEEN HIJACKED! REPEAT, PRIORITY FLIGHT HAS BEEN HIJACKED!!
UNGH!


THE SMALLER, FASTER PLANE BEARING CAPTAIN AMERICA AND HIS YOUTHFUL PARTNER SOON CATCHES UP WITH THE LUMBERING TRANSPORT.
WE'RE GAINING ON 'EM!!
NOT FOR LONG, BUCKY. THIS KITE JUST COMPLETED A TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHT, REMEMBER?
EVEN WITH THE EXTRA PETROL TANKS, OUR MOTORS ARE RUNNING ON NOTHING BUT VAPORS!
THEN PULL IN AS CLOSE TO THAT BIG BIRD AS YOU CAN GET, GROUP CAPTAIN.
YOU CAN'T MEAN TO JUMP TO THAT OTHER PLANE, CAP!
YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A PARACHUTE!
AND I CAN'T TAKE ONE. I'D HAVE TO WEAR MY SHIELD ON MY ARM IF I HAD A 'CHUTE ON MY BACK...
...AND I'M GOING TO NEED BOTH HANDS FREE IF THIS STUNT HAS ANY HOPE OF WORKING!
BUCKY, IF I MESS THIS UP, IT WILL BE UP TO YOU TO TRY NEXT.


GERONI-
MO-O-
O-OH!!
LEATHER GAUNTLETS FIND FAST PURCHASE ON THE SMOOTH STEEL HIDE OF THE BIG PLANE.
THUNG!
BUT AS THE FEROCIOUS WINDS OF THE SLIPSTREAM BUFFET HIM...
...CAPTAIN AMERICA REALIZES HE HAS BARELY BEGUN HIS BATTLE THIS DAY.
BARELY BEGUN!
BLAST!
RAKATAT ATAK


I HAVE THE SAME ADVANTAGE HERE THAT I HAD WITH THAT NAZI WAR WHEEL.
HE CAN'T SWING HIS GUNS IN TOO CLOSE WITHOUT HITTING THIS PLANE!
UH OH...
SPANG!
AS IF SENSING CAPTAIN AMERICA'S NEW DISTRESS, THE WIND SEEMS SUDDENLY TO REDOUBLE ITS EFFORT TO BLAST HIM FROM THE PLANE...
...WHILE THE HUMAN ENEMY SEES HIS CHANCE OF VICTORY DRAMATICALLY INCREASED!
RATATATAT!

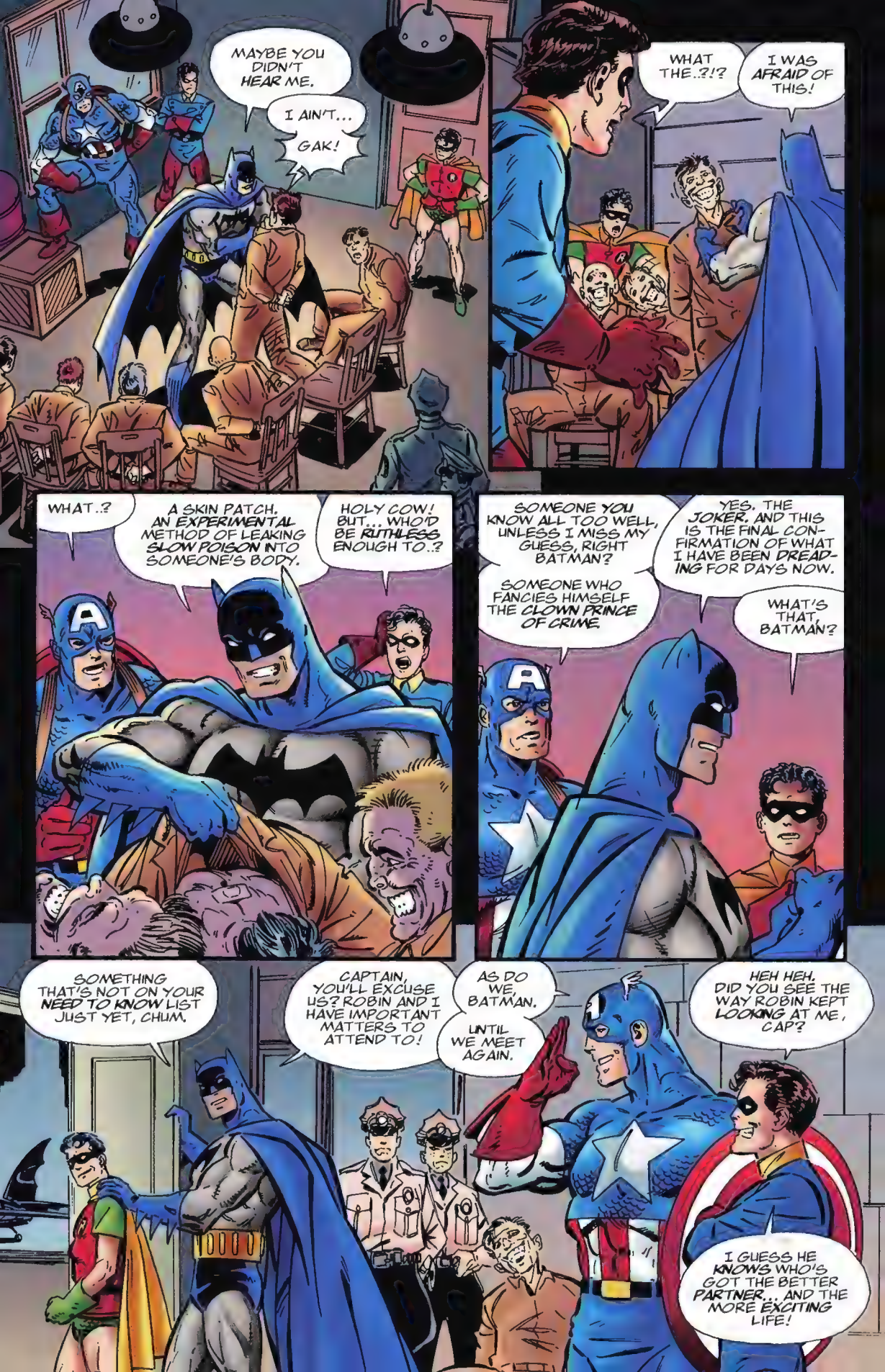
KOOM!
EASY THERE, CAPTAIN AMERICA.
WHAT IN..??
I'VE GOT YOU NOW!
NIGHT AND DAY THEY ARE, THESE TWO, THE BRIGHT, BOLD CHAMPION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THE DARK, MYSTERIOUS AVENGER OF GOTHAM.
HEROES THEY ARE, AND WARRIORS, AND IF THE UNIFORMS THEY WEAR AND THE METHODS THEY USE ARE STARKLY DIFFERENT...
THE BATMAN!!
...IT IS BECAUSE THE ENEMIES THEY FACE HAVE BEEN EQUALLY DISPARATE...
...UNTIL NOW!

WHAT MATTERS IS HOW FAST YOU MAKE YOUR RECOVERY.
AND WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU HAVE RECOVERED.
PRECISELY!
BATMAN!
OOF!
GUN 'IM DOWN!
YOUR ARRIVAL COULDN'T HAVE BEEN BETTER TIMED, CRUSADER.
I THINK I MAY HAVE OVERREACHED MYSELF JUST A TAD THAT TIME!
WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES, CAPTAIN. THAT'S WHY THEY PUT ERASERS ON THE ENDS OF PENCILS.

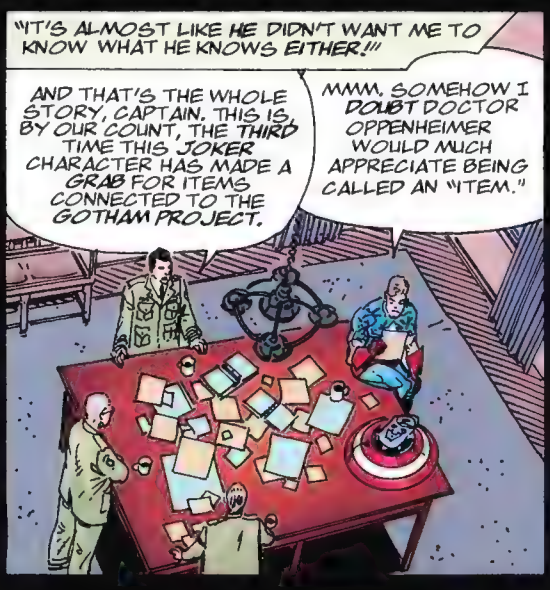
WHAT FOLLOWS CAN BARELY BE CALLED A FIGHT.
SAY THERE, BATMAN, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE ENOUGH LITTLE FRIENDS TO GO 'ROUND.
MIND IF I JOIN THE PARTY?
HELP YOURSELF, CAPTAIN.
CAPTAIN AMERIC...
UNF!
THE DUO OF COSTUMED CRIMEBUSTERS HAVE HURLED THEMSELVES INTO A CONFINED SPACE...
...WHERE THE OPPOSITION OUTNUMBERS THEM BY FOUR TO ONE.

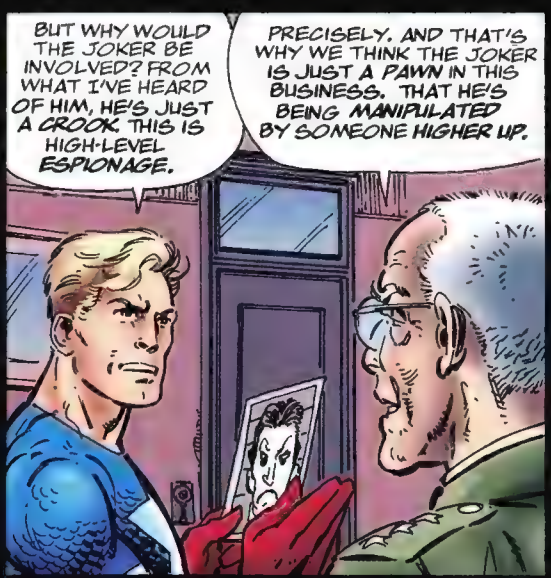
THUS, IF ANY DESCRIPTIVE TERM WERE TO BE USED IN THIS CONFRONTATION...
...IT WOULD NOT BE "FIGHT."
"MASSACRE," PERHAPS, BUT FOR BATMAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA, THIS IS HARDLY A FIGHT!

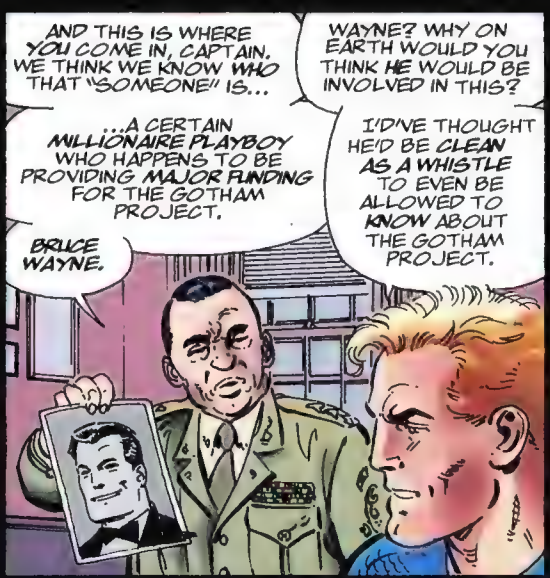
I HOPE THIS MOTLEY CREW ISN'T TYPICAL OF THE KIND OF OPPOSITION YOU FACE HERE IN GOTHAM.
I MIGHT FIND MYSELF STARTING TO DOUBT YOUR REPUTATION.
THE WAR HAS BEEN ROUGH ON EVERYONE, CAPTAIN.
WITH ALL THE STRONG, YOUNG MEN DRAFTED INTO THE ARMY, EVEN THE UNDERWORLD IS HAVING TROUBLE FINDING "SOLDIERS."
MM-MPH!
HOLY..! IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
ROBERT OPPENHEIMER! THEN THIS PRIORITY FLIGHT IS CONNECTED TO THE GOTHAM PROJECT?
YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT, BATMAN?
THERE IS PRECIOUS LITTLE THAT HAPPENS IN THIS TOWN THAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT, DOCTOR.
BATMAN'S KNOWLEDGE WORRIES ME A LOT LESS THAN WHAT THESE GOONS MIGHT KNOW.
"WE'D BETTER GET THIS CRATE BACK ON THE GROUND...
"...AND FIND OUT JUST HOW MUCH OF THE NATION'S BIGGEST SECRET HAS BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE!!!"
WELL, GENTLEMEN? WHO WANTS TO BE FIRST TO PLAY CANARY?
W-WE GOT N-NOTHIN' T'SAY!
SIMON AIR
GKN163
PRIVATE

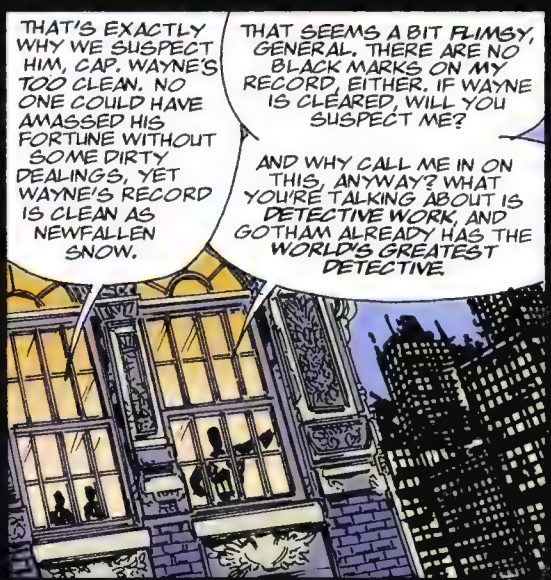

MAYBE YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME.
I AIN'T...
GAK!
WHAT THE..?!?
I WAS AFRAID OF THIS!
WHAT..?
A SKIN PATCH. AN EXPERIMENTAL METHOD OF LEAKING SLOW POISON INTO SOMEONE'S BODY.
HOLY COW! BUT... WHO'D BE RUTHLESS ENOUGH TO..?
SOMEONE YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL, UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, RIGHT BATMAN?
SOMEONE WHO FANCIES HIMSELF THE CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME.
YES. THE JOKER. AND THIS IS THE FINAL CONFIRMATION OF WHAT I HAVE BEEN DREADING FOR DAYS NOW.
WHAT'S THAT, BATMAN?
SOMETHING THAT'S NOT ON YOUR NEED TO KNOW LIST JUST YET, CHUM.
CAPTAIN, YOU'LL EXCUSE US? ROBIN AND I HAVE IMPORTANT MATTERS TO ATTEND TO!
AS DO WE, BATMAN.
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.
HEH HEH. DID YOU SEE THE WAY ROBIN KEPT LOOKING AT ME, CAP?
I GUESS HE KNOWS WHO'S GOT THE BETTER PARTNER... AND THE MORE EXCITING LIFE!

OR, MAYBE NOT!
CAP'S BEEN IN THERE MEETING WITH THE BIG BRASS FOR ALMOST FOUR HOURS NOW, WHILE I'VE BEEN LEFT COOLING MY HEELS IN THE HALL!
I KNOW I DON'T HAVE CAP'S FULL SECURITY CLEARANCE, BUT I'M SURPRISED HE DIDN'T SPEAK UP FOR ME ON THIS ONE.


"IT'S ALMOST LIKE HE DIDN'T WANT ME TO KNOW WHAT HE KNOWS EITHER!"
AND THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY, CAPTAIN. THIS IS, BY OUR COUNT, THE THIRD TIME THIS JOKER CHARACTER HAS MADE A GRAB FOR ITEMS CONNECTED TO THE GOTHAM PROJECT.
MMM. SOMEHOW I DOUBT DOCTOR OPPENHEIMER WOULD MUCH APPRECIATE BEING CALLED AN "ITEM."


BUT WHY WOULD THE JOKER BE INVOLVED? FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD OF HIM, HE'S JUST A CROOK. THIS IS HIGH-LEVEL ESPIONAGE.
PRECISELY. AND THAT'S WHY WE THINK THE JOKER IS JUST A PAWN IN THIS BUSINESS. THAT HE'S BEING MANIPULATED BY SOMEONE HIGHER UP.


AND THIS IS WHERE YOU COME IN, CAPTAIN. WE THINK WE KNOW WHO THAT "SOMEONE" IS...
...A CERTAIN MILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY WHO HAPPENS TO BE PROVIDING MAJOR FUNDING FOR THE GOTHAM PROJECT.
BRUCE WAYNE.
WAYNE? WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU THINK HE WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THIS?
I'D'VE THOUGHT HE'D BE CLEAN AS A WHISTLE TO EVEN BE ALLOWED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOTHAM PROJECT.

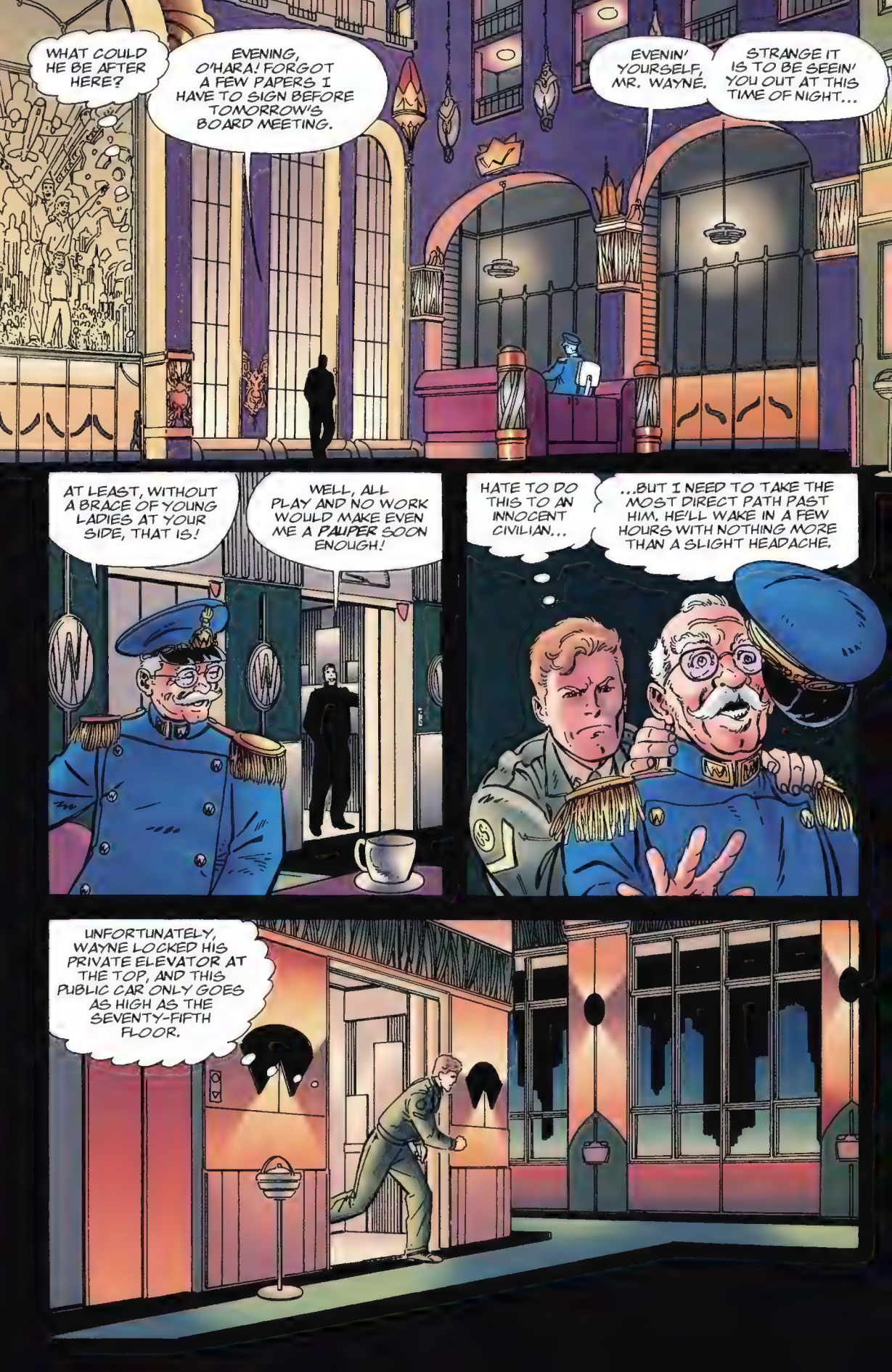

THAT'S EXACTLY WHY WE SUSPECT HIM, CAP. WAYNE'S TOO CLEAN. NO ONE COULD HAVE AMASSED HIS FORTUNE WITHOUT SOME DIRTY DEALINGS, YET WAYNE'S RECORD IS CLEAN AS NEWFALLEN SNOW.
THAT SEEMS A BIT FLIMSY, GENERAL. THERE ARE NO BLACK MARKS ON MY RECORD, EITHER. IF WAYNE IS CLEARED, WILL YOU SUSPECT ME?
AND WHY CALL ME IN ON THIS, ANYWAY? WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT IS DETECTIVE WORK, AND GOTHAM ALREADY HAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE.

TRUE. BUT BATMAN IS NOT UNDER OUR COMMAND. YOU--OR RATHER, STEVE ROGERS IS.
AND WE HAVE ARRANGED FOR STEVE ROGERS TO BECOME BRUCE WAYNE'S BODYGUARD. TO "PROTECT" WAYNE FROM THE JOKER'S HENCHMEN.
THAT'S YOUR ASSIGNMENT, CAPTAIN. AND YOU HAVE A VERY TIGHT SCHEDULE. IF WAYNE IS BEHIND THIS, WE NEED TO KNOW IN LESS THAN SEVENTY-TWO HOURS.

"THAT'S WHEN A VERY SPECIAL SHIPMENT WILL BE FLYING OUT OF A SECRET AIRBASE OUTSIDE GOTHAM."
WELL, I MUST SAY THIS IS ALL VERY FLATTERING, BUT QUITE UNNECESSARY!
I MAY BE PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE WAR EFFORT, BUT I HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE THAT COULD BE OF ANY USE TO THIS... JOKER PERSON.
THAT MAY BE, MR. WAYNE, BUT WE PREFER TO BE SURE.
EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, YOUR LIFE COULD STILL BE AT HAZARD.
WELL, ALL RIGHT. AS LONG AS HAVING PRIVATE ROGERS AROUND DOESN'T INTERFERE WITH MY BUSY SCHEDULE.
BUT IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW, STEVE ROGERS FINDS THAT STAYING OUT OF BRUCE WAYNE'S WAY...
I'LL TRY TO STAY OUT OF YOUR WAY AS MUCH AS I CAN, MR. WAYNE.
...LEADS TO HOUR UPON HOUR OF BOREDOM--
PAINFUL TO ANY MAN, BUT NEARLY INTOLERABLE TO THE HUMAN FIGHTING MACHINE THAT IS CAPTAIN AMERICA.

WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING, BRUCE! YOU HAVEN'T LET ME IN ON EVERY-THING THAT'S HAPPENING...
...BUT I'D HARDLY BE WORTHY OF BEING ROBIN IF I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT FOR MYSELF THAT SOMETHING BIG IS GOING ON. SOMETHING THAT NEEDS BATMAN!
YES, DICK, YOU'RE RIGHT. AND WELL-MEANING AS HE MAY BE, PRIVATE ROGERS IS JUST IN THE WAY.
THE JOKER'S MEN HAVE BEEN BUSY ALL OVER GOTHAM. IF WHAT I KNOW IS TRUE, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN IN THE NEXT TEN HOURS--POSSIBLY LESS.
AND WITH ROGERS DOGGING MY EVERY MOVE, I CAN'T CHASE DOWN THE LEADS AS THEY COME UP. I'M FORCED TO WAIT UNTIL THE JOKER MAKES HIS MOVE, AND HOPE I CAN GET TO HIM BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
WELL, WE'VE BEEN LUCKY ON THAT SCORE SO FAR.
JOKER MAY HAVE MANAGED TO ESCAPE US, BUT WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO FOIL HIS PLANS.
HAVE WE? I WISH I COULD BE SURE!
THIS IS ALL SO MUCH OUT OF THE JOKER'S USUAL LINE THAT I'M NOT CONVINCED I CAN PREDICT HIS MOVE-MENTS AS I NORMALLY MIGHT--NOT THAT THAT IS EVER EASY!
I SUPPOSE I COULD GO OUT ON MY OWN? I'VE DONE IT BEFORE, OPERATED AS ROBIN WITHOUT BATMAN.
NO, THAT WOULD BE FAR TOO DANGEROUS. YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION I DO, AND I CAN'T RISK SHARING IT WITH YOU. NOT YET.
I'M JUST GOING TO HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO SHED PRIVATE ROGERS AND KEEP MY "APPOINTMENT" WITH THE JOKER!
WELL, WELL!
SO THE BIG BRASS WERE RIGHT!

UNAWARE THAT HE HAS HEARD ONLY THE LAST FEW WORDS OF A FAR MORE REVEALING CONVERSATION...
...LATE THAT NIGHT STEVE ROGERS LIES IN WAIT OUTSIDE BRUCE WAYNE'S BEDROOM.
I SNUCK IN EARLIER AND RIGGED TRIP WIRES ON ALL THE WINDOWS OF WAYNE'S BEDROOM SUITE. IF HE SNEAKS OUT ANY WAY OTHER THAN THIS DOOR, I'LL STILL KNOW ABOUT IT.
AND IT LOOKS AS IF MY EXTRA PRECAUTIONS WEREN'T NECESSARY.
AND SO, A FEW MINUTES LATER...
HE DRIVES VERY WELL FOR SOMEONE WHO'S USED TO HAVING HIS CHAUFFEUR TAKE HIM EVERYWHERE.
THERE ARE LAYERS TO OUR MR. WAYNE THAT HE KEEPS WELL HIDDEN!
NOW, WHERE ARE WE HEADED?
THE WAYNE FOUNDATION BUILDING!

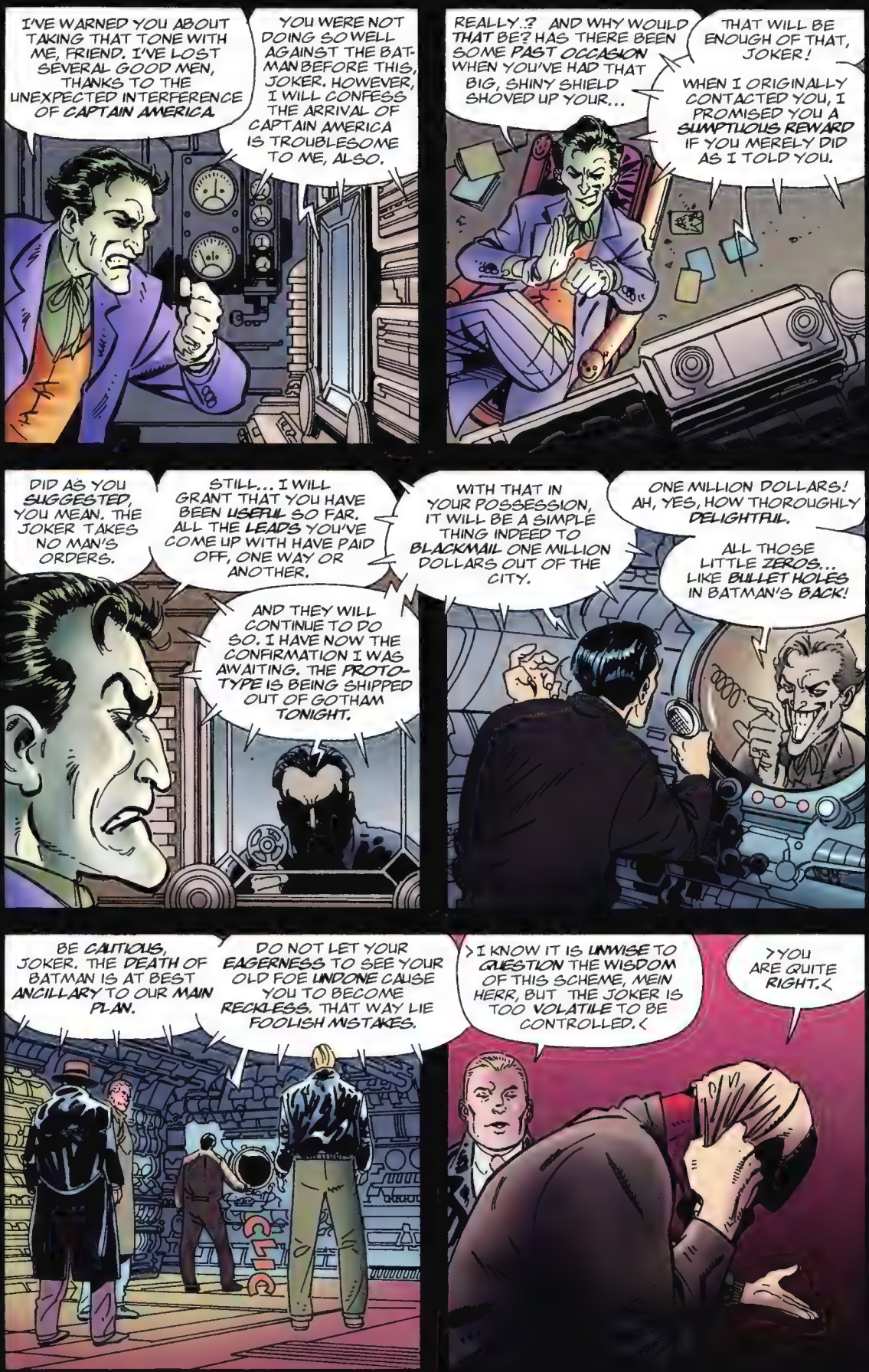

WHAT COULD HE BE AFTER HERE?
EVENING, O'HARA! FORGOT A FEW PAPERS I HAVE TO SIGN BEFORE TOMORROW'S BOARD MEETING.
EVENIN' YOURSELF, MR. WAYNE.
STRANGE IT IS TO BE SEEIN' YOU OUT AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT...
AT LEAST, WITHOUT A BRACE OF YOUNG LADIES AT YOUR SIDE, THAT IS!
WELL, ALL PLAY AND NO WORK WOULD MAKE EVEN ME A *PAUPER* SOON ENOUGH!
HATE TO DO THIS TO AN INNOCENT CIVILIAN...
...BUT I NEED TO TAKE THE MOST DIRECT PATH PAST HIM. HE'LL WAKE IN A FEW HOURS WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A SLIGHT HEADACHE.
UNFORTUNATELY, WAYNE LOCKED HIS PRIVATE ELEVATOR AT THE TOP, AND THIS PUBLIC CAR ONLY GOES AS HIGH AS THE SEVENTY-FIFTH FLOOR.

THAT LEAVES FIVE FLOORS FOR ME TO CLIMB THE HARD WAY...
...ASSUMING WAYNE WENT ALL THE WAY UP TO HIS PENTHOUSE.
WHICH HE DID.
WHAT IN..??
ALL RIGHT, WAYNE! I'LL JUST RELIEVE YOU OF THOSE DOCUMENTS!
I DON'T THINK SO, ROGERS.
WOW! THAT'S SOME SPECTACULAR MOVE FOR A MAN IN HIS SHAPE!

HE MOVED LIKE GREASED LIGHTNING!
THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED MY LEAP.
AMAZING! I HAVEN'T SEEN WAYNE LIFT ANYTHING HEAVIER THAN A MARTINI GLASS...
...BUT THE MUSCLES UNDER THIS CLOTH ARE HARD AS STEEL!
I'VE NEVER FOUGHT ANYONE WITH HIS NATIVE SKILL AND CUNNING! THIS CAN'T BE STANDARD G.I. TRAINING.
HE'S MATCHING ME MOVE FOR MOVE!
SOME OF THESE MOVES ARE STRAIGHT OUT OF AKI JITSU AND OKINAWAN TE.
BUT THERE AREN'T TEN PEOPLE WHO EVEN KNOW THOSE DISCIPLINES OUTSIDE THE FAR EAST!

THIS IS GETTING CLOSE TO POINTLESS.
I BLOCK EVERY MOVE HE MAKES, HE BLOCKS ME. HE SEEMS ALMOST TO HAVE A SLIGHT EDGE, BUT THE ONLY MAN I WOULD THINK WHO COULD HAVE THAT WOULD BE...
OF COURSE! WHO ELSE WOULD BE SENT TO "GUARD" BRUCE WAYNE!
ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN! I DON'T THINK WE NEED PURSUE THIS ANY FURTHER.
WHAT..?
OH, FOR..!! IF IT WAS A SNAKE, IT WOULD'VE BIT ME!
THOSE FIGHTING SKILLS PLUS THE WAYNE FORTUNE WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD MAKING BATMAN!
USA
US
WELCOME TO GOTHAM. I CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER ALLY AGAINST THE JOKER'S LATEST SCHEME.
NOR CAN I, BATMAN. I ONLY HOPE THE TIME I'VE WASTED CHASING THE BRUCE WAYNE WILD GOOSE..

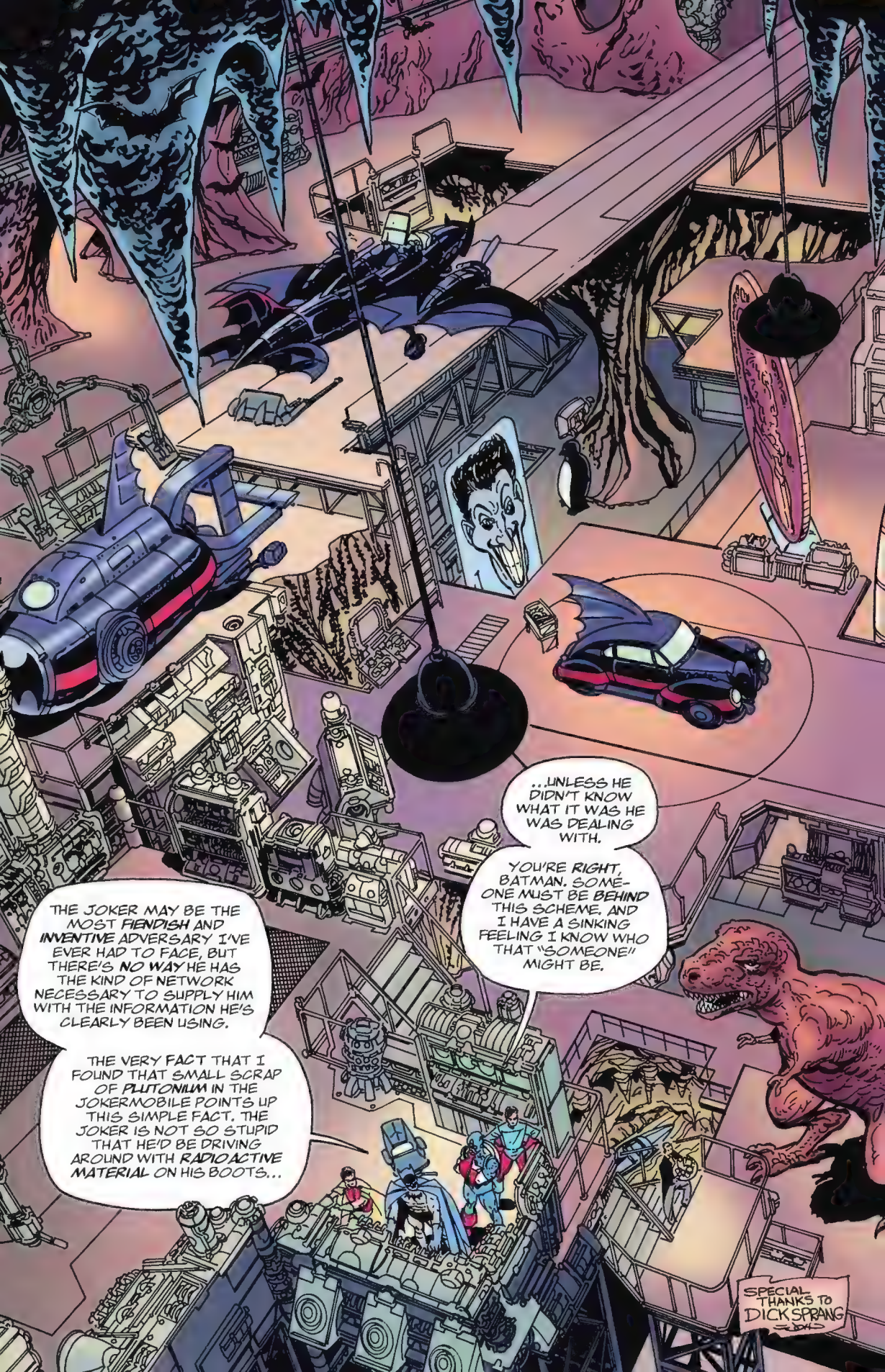
"...HASN'T GIVEN YOUR HARLEQUIN FRIEND THE TIME HE NEEDS TO FINISH WHATEVER HIS PLAN MIGHT BE!!!"
GROK'S
CLOSED
BLAST!
BLAST, I SAY!
THE CITY HAS BEEN CLOSED TIGHT AS A DRUM! SINCE THE FAILED ATTEMPT TO GRAB OPPENHEIMER, I'VE BEEN STYMIED AT EVERY TURN!
AND BY MERE COPS AND DOUGH-BOYS!
BATMAN AND HIS BOY BLUNDER HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN SEEN IN GOTHAM FOR MORE THAN TWO DAYS!
BLET!
OH, AND NOW, JUST TO COMPLETE MY DAY, I SUPPOSE MY MYSTERIOUS LITTLE FRIEND WILL WANT HIS "REPORT!"
JOKER! REPORT YOUR ACTIVITIES!

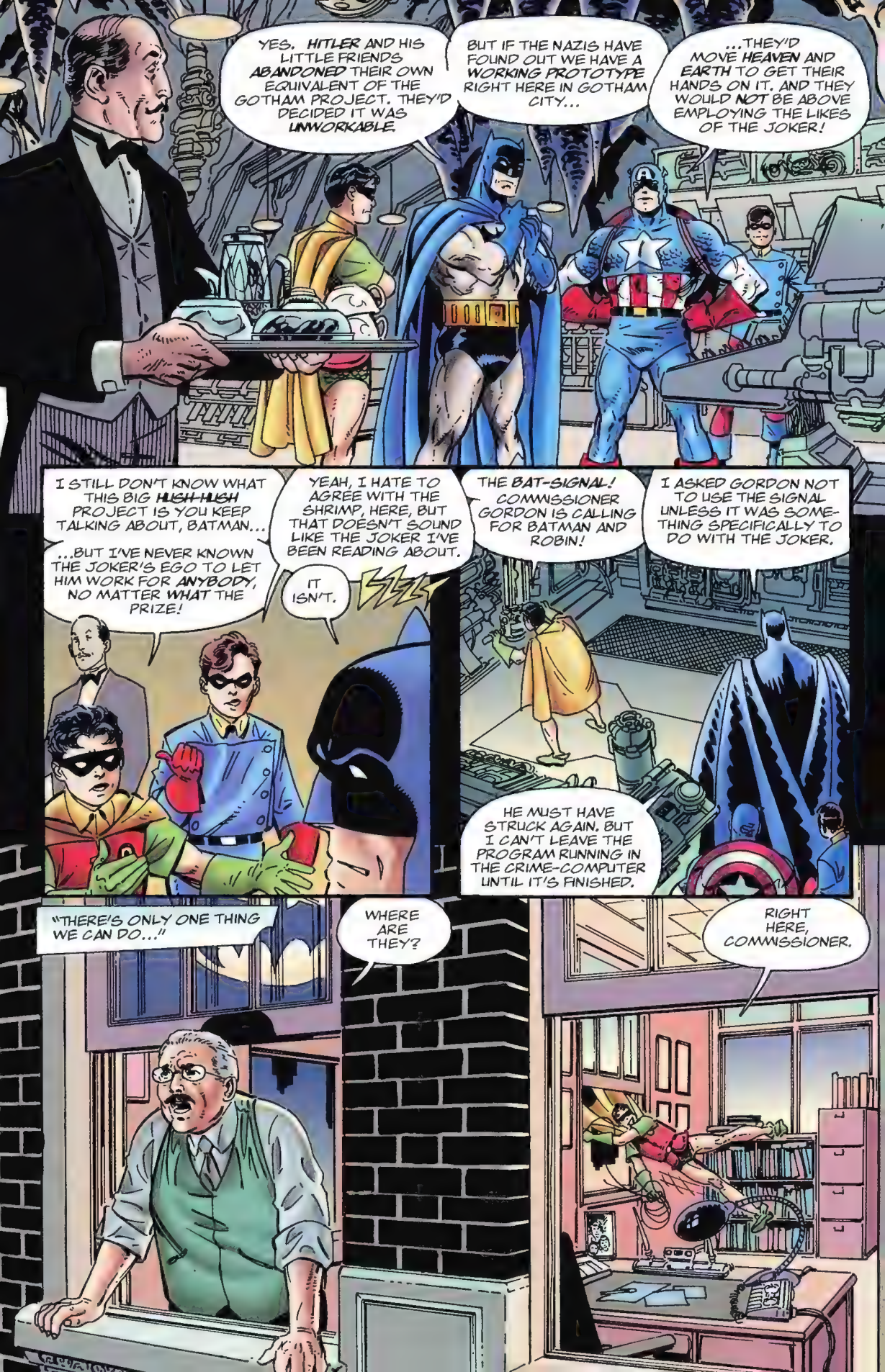

I'VE WARNED YOU ABOUT TAKING THAT TONE WITH ME, FRIEND. I'VE LOST SEVERAL GOOD MEN, THANKS TO THE UNEXPECTED INTERFERENCE OF CAPTAIN AMERICA.
YOU WERE NOT DOING SO WELL AGAINST THE BATMAN BEFORE THIS, JOKER. HOWEVER, I WILL CONFESS THE ARRIVAL OF CAPTAIN AMERICA IS TROUBLESOME TO ME, ALSO.
REALLY..? AND WHY WOULD THAT BE? HAS THERE BEEN SOME PAST OCCASION WHEN YOU'VE HAD THAT BIG, SHINY SHIELD SHOVED UP YOUR...
THAT WILL BE ENOUGH OF THAT, JOKER!
WHEN I ORIGINALLY CONTACTED YOU, I PROMISED YOU A SUMPTUOUS REWARD IF YOU MERELY DID AS I TOLD YOU.
DID AS YOU SUGGESTED, YOU MEAN. THE JOKER TAKES NO MAN'S ORDERS.
STILL... I WILL GRANT THAT YOU HAVE BEEN USEFUL SO FAR. ALL THE LEADS YOU'VE COME UP WITH HAVE PAID OFF, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
AND THEY WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. I HAVE NOW THE CONFIRMATION I WAS AWAITING. THE PROTOTYPE IS BEING SHIPPED OUT OF GOTHAM TONIGHT.
WITH THAT IN YOUR POSSESSION, IT WILL BE A SIMPLE THING INDEED TO BLACKMAIL ONE MILLION DOLLARS OUT OF THE CITY.
ONE MILLION DOLLARS! AH, YES, HOW THOROUGHLY DELIGHTFUL.
ALL THOSE LITTLE ZEROS... LIKE BULLET HOLES IN BATMAN'S BACK!
BE CAUTIOUS, JOKER. THE DEATH OF BATMAN IS AT BEST ANCILLARY TO OUR MAIN PLAN.
DO NOT LET YOUR EAGERNESS TO SEE YOUR OLD FOE UNDONE CAUSE YOU TO BECOME RECKLESS. THAT WAY LIE FOOLISH MISTAKES.
>I KNOW IT IS UNWISE TO QUESTION THE WISDOM OF THIS SCHEME, MEIN HERR, BUT THE JOKER IS TOO VOLATILE TO BE CONTROLLED.<
>YOU ARE QUITE RIGHT.<

> IT IS MOST UNWISE TO QUESTION ME UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!<
PAF!
> HOWEVER, THAT WAS IN A DAY WHEN THE REICH HAD TIME FOR SUCH SMALL NICETIES.<
> IN THESE GRIM DAYS THERE IS TIME FOR NOTHING THAT WILL NOT SERVE TO ACCELERATE THE FINAL VICTORY OF THE FATHERLAND.<
> WHAT A PITY YOU SHALL NOT LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKE.<
> I ONCE TOLD OUR BELOVED FÜHRER A DEAD MAN WAS OF NO USE, WHILE A LIVING ONE COULD BE RETRAINED.<

FOUR HOURS LATER.
BEYOND THE URBAN SPRAWL OF GOTHAM CITY THE HILLS AND VALLEYS ARE STILL AND SILENT.
EVEN A WHISPER SEEMS LOUD IN THIS FROZEN LANDSCAPE.
UNIT BLUE, THIS IS UNIT GREEN. DO YOU READ ME?
GREEN, THIS IS BLUE READING YOU LOUD AND CLEAR.
BASE CONFIRMS FAT BOY WILL PASS YOU IN THREE MINUTES.
OKAY, YOU GUYS! MOVE IT! TAKE UP YOUR POSITIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ROAD.
MAN, O MAN, WHAT DID I DO TO PULL THIS DUTY?
I SHOULD BE ASLEEP IN MY NICE WARM BUNK!
YOU'LL BE ASLEEP IN THE STOCKADE IF YOU DON'T KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT AND YOUR EARS OPEN.
AND THAT'S ANOTHER THING! WHY IS THE BRASS SO EDGY OVER THIS ONE? CHARLIE PARKER GOT BUSTED RIGHT OUT OF THE REGIMENT JUST BECAUSE HE MENTIONED THIS DRILL TO HIS GIRL.
WHO IS THIS "FAT BOY" EVERYBODY IS SO...
HEY, WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
TEE HEE. NUTHIN'. TEE HEE HEE,
I JUST... TEE HEE... GOT THE... TEE HEE... GIGGLES ALL OF A.. TEE HEE... SUDDEN.
WELL, CUT IT OUT! YOU'RE... TEE HEE... YOU'RE GONNA GET US... TEE HEE... GET US BOTH... TEE HEE...
U.S.
BWAH-HA-HA!! CAN'T...HA-HA-HA-HA...CAN'T STOP...
HEY, YOU EIGHT-BALLS, CUT IT OUT!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY THAT YOU...
TEE HEE...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA


THE JOKER MAY BE THE MOST FIENDISH AND INVENTIVE ADVERSARY I'VE EVER HAD TO FACE, BUT THERE'S NO WAY HE HAS THE KIND OF NETWORK NECESSARY TO SUPPLY HIM WITH THE INFORMATION HE'S CLEARLY BEEN USING.
THE VERY FACT THAT I FOUND THAT SMALL SCRAP OF PLUTONIUM IN THE JOKERMOBILE POINTS UP THIS SIMPLE FACT. THE JOKER IS NOT SO STUPID THAT HE'D BE DRIVING AROUND WITH RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL ON HIS BOOTS...
YOU'RE RIGHT, BATMAN. SOMEONE MUST BE BEHIND THIS SCHEME. AND I HAVE A SINKING FEELING I KNOW WHO THAT "SOMEONE" MIGHT BE.
...UNLESS HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS HE WAS DEALING WITH.
SPECIAL THANKS TO DICK SPRANG


YES. HITLER AND HIS LITTLE FRIENDS ABANDONED THEIR OWN EQUIVALENT OF THE GOTHAM PROJECT. THEY'D DECIDED IT WAS UNWORKABLE.
BUT IF THE NAZIS HAVE FOUND OUT WE HAVE A WORKING PROTOTYPE RIGHT HERE IN GOTHAM CITY...
...THEY'D MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH TO GET THEIR HANDS ON IT. AND THEY WOULD NOT BE ABOVE EMPLOYING THE LIKES OF THE JOKER!
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS BIG HUSH-HUSH PROJECT IS YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT, BATMAN...
...BUT I'VE NEVER KNOWN THE JOKER'S EGO TO LET HIM WORK FOR ANYBODY, NO MATTER WHAT THE PRIZE!
YEAH, I HATE TO AGREE WITH THE SHRIMP, HERE, BUT THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE JOKER I'VE BEEN READING ABOUT.
IT ISN'T.
SLG
THE BAT-SIGNAL! COMMISSIONER GORDON IS CALLING FOR BATMAN AND ROBIN!
I ASKED GORDON NOT TO USE THE SIGNAL UNLESS IT WAS SOMETHING SPECIFICALLY TO DO WITH THE JOKER.
HE MUST HAVE STRUCK AGAIN. BUT I CAN'T LEAVE THE PROGRAM RUNNING IN THE CRIME-COMPUTER UNTIL IT'S FINISHED.
"THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO..."
WHERE ARE THEY?
RIGHT HERE, COMMISSIONER.

BUT BATMAN COULDN'T MAKE IT JUST NOW...
...SO HE SENT IN A SUBSTITUTE!
GOOD LORD!
CAPTAIN AMERICA!
THIS IS A GREAT HONOR, SIR! I'D HEARD YOU WERE IN GOTHAM, BUT NO ONE COULD CONFIRM IT!
A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, COMMISSIONER. YOUR REPUTATION HAS SPREAD FAR BEYOND THE GOTHAM CITY LIMITS.
WHAT'S UP, COMMISSIONER?
I JUST RECEIVED WORD FROM THE SHORE PATROL THAT ONE OF THEIR LAUNCHES WAS FOUND ADRIFT ON THE LAKE.
THERE WERE FIVE MEN ABOARD, AND ALL WERE DEAD--DEAD WITH HIDEOUS GRINS ON THEIR FACES!
A SURE SIGN THE JOKER WAS INVOLVED! BUT... WHY WOULD HE KILL FIVE GUYS IN A SHORE PATROL BOAT?
WHERE WAS THE BOAT FOUND DRIFTING, COMMISSIONER?
R

NORTHEAST QUADRANT DEFENSES
RIGHT HERE, CAPTAIN. THEIR NORMAL PATROL AREA WAS ALONG THIS SECTION OF THE LAKEFRONT.
HMM. MIND IF I BORROW A RULER, COMMISSIONER?
IF WE ASSUME A POINT BEGINNING JUST HERE, OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS...
...AND EXTRAPOLATE A LINE THAT LEADS THROUGH THE AREA PATROLLED BY THAT BOAT AND ITS CREW...
GOTHAM
WASHINGTON D.C.
...WE END UP WITH A CLEAR PATH ALL THE WAY TO WASHINGTON, D.C.!
BUT... WHY START YOUR LINE OUT THERE, CAP? THERE'S NOTHING THERE BUT WOODS AND SWAMPLAND.
NOTHING THAT IS OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGED, ROBIN.
AND NOTHING I CAN FREELY DISCUSS, EVEN WITH YOU.
BUT I THINK I CAN SAFELY SAY THIS ALREADY ROTTEN CASE JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT NASTIER!
MEANWHILE...

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CITY, THE BATMOBILE RACES THROUGH THE EMPTY STREETS.
THIS IS A PRETTY HOT LITTLE WAGON YOU'VE GOT HERE, BATMAN.
OF COURSE, IT WOULDN'T LAST THREE SECONDS ON A REAL BATTLEFIELD.
YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT, BUCKY. THE BATMOBILE WAS DESIGNED AND BUILT TO FUNCTION IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT KIND OF WAR FROM THE ONE YOU AND THE CAPTAIN ARE FIGHTING.
FOR INSTANCE...
HEY! YOU KILLED THE HEADLIGHTS!
HOW CAN YOU STEER..??
LIKE THIS...
CLOSED
THE BATMOBILE'S WINDOWS ARE EQUIPPED WITH INFRARED SCANNERS THAT MAKE IT AS EASY TO DRIVE IN PITCH BLACK NIGHT AS IN BRIGHTEST NOON.
NOW, ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION COLLATED BY THE CRIME COMPUTER IN THE BATCAVE, THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL INSTANCES OF MEN AND MATERIEL MOVING THROUGH THIS AREA.
AN UNUSUAL DEGREE OF ACTIVITY FOR AN AREA THAT HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY SHUT DOWN SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS LIKE EVERY EMPTY WAREHOUSE IN AMERICA IS BEING PUT TO SOME ROTTEN USE.
IN GOTHAM TO BE SURE, BUCKY.
ROBINSON'S
A LOT OF NON-ESSENTIAL PRODUCTION HAS BEEN CURTAILED BY THE WAR EFFORT, LEAVING MANY SUCH PLACES STANDING IDLE.
NOW, BE CAREFUL. IF THIS PLACE IS ONE OF THE JOKER'S LAIRS...
...THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE ALARM TRIGGERS IN PLACES A NORMAL MIND WOULD NOT EVEN THINK OF.
I SURE HOPE THAT'S JUST PARANOIA ON YOUR PART, BATMAN.
I'M NOT USED TO SNEAKING AROUND. CAP AND ME USUALLY JUST...
BEEP!
GET THEM!
DRAT!

LOOKS LIKE YOU GET TO EXERCISE YOUR FIGHTING MUSCLES AFTER ALL, BUCKY.
WHERE ARE THEY COMING FROM?
JOKER MUST HAVE HALF THE UNDERWORLD WORKING FOR HIM!
JOKER?
AND WHY WOULD YOU THINK THIS WAS ONE OF THE JOKER'S LITTLE LAIRS?

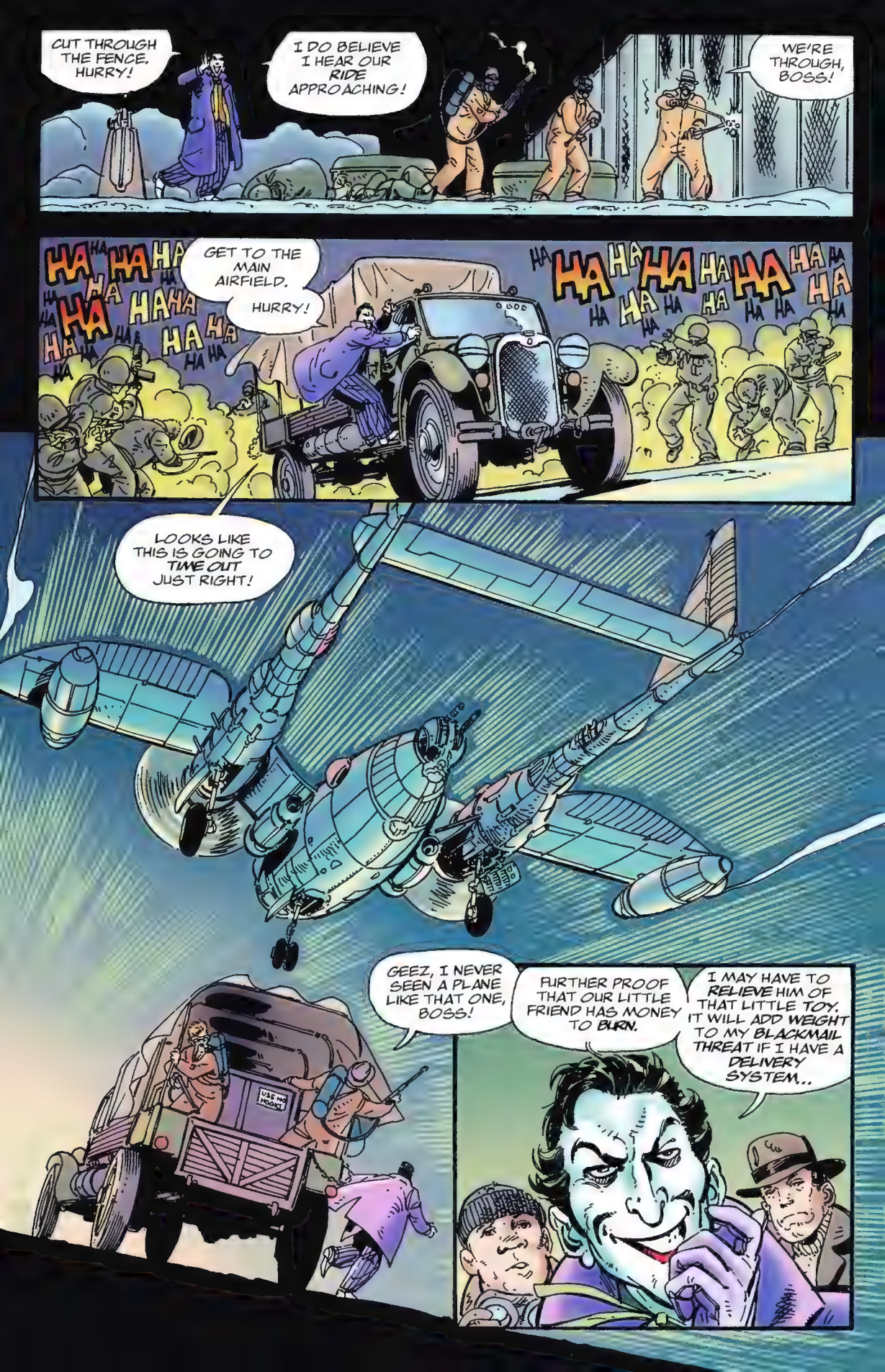
MEANWHILE...
NO ONE IN SIGHT!
WHICH IS NOT AT ALL HOW IT SHOULD BE!
GOTHAM SHORE PATROL
THERE SHOULD BE A COUPLE OF MEN POSTED HERE EVEN IF...
LOOK!
THE JOKER MUST BE TESTING SOME NEW KIND OF JOKER VENOM.
BUT... I DON'T GET WHY HE'D WANT TO TURN THEIR FACES RED INSTEAD OF WHITE.
HE WOULDN'T.
THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON HERE YOU'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT, CAP.
YES. SOMETHING G2 AND BRITISH INTELLIGENCE HAS SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME AND EFFORT KEEPING OUT OF THE PRESS.
BUT IT CONFIRMS MY WORST FEARS, ROBIN.
THE TARGET OF THIS SCHEME IS ALMOST CERTAINLY WASHINGTON, D.C...

"...AND THE JOKER HAS ALLIED HIMSELF WITH THE ONE MAN WHO MAY BE CRAZIER THAN HE IS!!!"
OH, MY ACHIN' HEAD!
I THOUGHT I'D WAKE UP DEAD!
TIME ENOUGH FOR THAT LATER, KID.
YES, THE DEATHS OF TWO SUCH ILLUSTRIOUS FOES SHOULD BE HANDLED WITH A DEGREE OF ELAN...
ARE YOU FINISHED?
YOU! WHAT IN BLUE BLAZES ARE YOU DOING IN AMERICA??
ARE YOU TRULY SO DIMWITTED AS TO HAVE NOT YET DEDUCED IT IS MY GENIUS THAT IS BEHIND THE JOKER'S LATEST ACTIONS?
AH, BUT HERR FLEDERMAUS, WE HAVE NOT BEEN FORMALLY INTRODUCED. I AM...
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. THE NAZI MADMAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE RED SKULL!
KLIK

IN FACT IT WAS ADOLF HITLER HIMSELF WHO CREATED THIS NAME AND MISSION FOR ME, BATMAN...
...AS YOUR OWN PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT ORDERED THE CREATION OF CAPTAIN AMERICA AS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO MY EXISTENCE.
BELIEVE WHAT YOU NEED TO GET YOU THROUGH THE DAY, SKULL.
BUT I MUST ADMIT TO BEING AS SURPRISED AS BUCKY TO SEE YOU STATESIDE.
I THOUGHT YOU PREFERRED TO RUN THINGS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES. TO LET YOUR MINIONS DO YOUR DIRTY WORK.
ORDINARILY, YES, I DO PREFER THE ROLE OF PLANNER, OF GENERAL.
BUT THIS PARTICULAR OPERATION REQUIRES MY SPECIAL ATTENTION.
AS DOES THE ELIMINATION OF YOURSELF AND YOUR YOUNG PARTNER.
EVEN IN GERMANY WE HAVE HEARD THE LEGENDS OF BATMAN AND ROBIN, MOST ESPECIALLY OF YOUR UNCANNY ABILITY TO ESCAPE THE MOST INSIDIOUS TRAPS.
ALAS, ROBIN WOULD APPEAR TO BE OTHERWISE ENGAGED...
...LEAVING ONLY THIS POOR SUBSTITUTE TO DIE IN HIS PLACE!
koff koff
NOBODY'S DEAD YET, RATZI!
NO, BUT IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, BUCKY BARNES. THE HOIST TO WHICH YOU AND THE BATMAN ARE SECURED IS TIMED TO DESCEND ONCE MY MEN AND I HAVE REACHED A SAFE DISTANCE.
THE EXPLOSION THIS WILL TRIGGER IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT WE INTEND TO UNLEASH UPON WASHINGTON, BUT IT WILL DO THE JOB FOR THE TWO OF YOU.

FAREWELL, BATMAN. IN A WAY, YOU MIGHT EVEN CONSIDER THIS ACT A KINDNESS. I FEAR YOU WOULD FIND NO HAPPINESS IN THE WORLD THE THIRD REICH WILL CREATE!
UN-HH! THESE ROPES ARE TOO TIGHT FOR ME TO GET OUT.
HOW ABOUT YOU, BATMAN?
"...BATMAN..?"
STOP THE CAR.
FINGER CO.
PARIS
IT IS DONE.

"I WONDER HOW MY AMERICAN PARTNER WILL FEEL WHEN HE LEARNS THAT THE RED SKULL HAS SUCCEEDED WHERE HE HAS FAILED SO MANY TIMES BEFORE."
SOMETHING WRONG, CAPTAIN?
NOT SURE. JUST FELT A CHILL--LIKE SOMEBODY HAD STEPPED ON MY GRAVE.
I'M GOING TO TAKE THAT AS A SIGN THAT WE HAVE TO GET TO THAT SECRET AIRFIELD ALL THE SOONER!
OKAY, YOU FINALLY TOLD ME WHAT THE "X" YOU MARKED ON THAT MAP MEANT...
...BUT ACCORDING TO THE LATEST REPORT FROM G2 THE JOKER HAS ALREADY SNATCHED THIS "FAT BOY" THING, WHATEVER IT IS.
WHY WOULD HE TAKE IT TO THE VERY PLACE IT WAS HEADING?
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH EASIER TO HIT A MOVING CONVOY THAN A HEAVILY GUARDED AIRFIELD, ROBIN. NATURALLY THE JOKER STRUCK THE WEAKER TARGET.
BUT THE ARMY AIR CORPS HAS TAKEN GREAT PAINS TO RENDER THAT BASE OFFICIALLY NON- EXISTENT. IT, AND ANY PLANES THAT FLY INTO OR OUT OF IT.
"SO, IRONICALLY ENOUGH, THAT BASE IS STILL THE BEST PLACE FROM WHICH TO GET FAT BOY OUT OF THE CITY.
"ESPECIALLY SINCE AN ATTACK NOW WOULD BE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED!"
JEEPERS, IT'S COLD! HOPE THEY'RE KEEPIN' ALL TH' BRASS MONKEYS INSIDE T'NIGHT!
YEAH. HEH HEH. I SURE...
HA HA HA..
STOP - SHOW PASS
HEY, IT WASN'T THAT FUNNY... HEH HEH
BWAH-HA-HA-HA-HA!!!

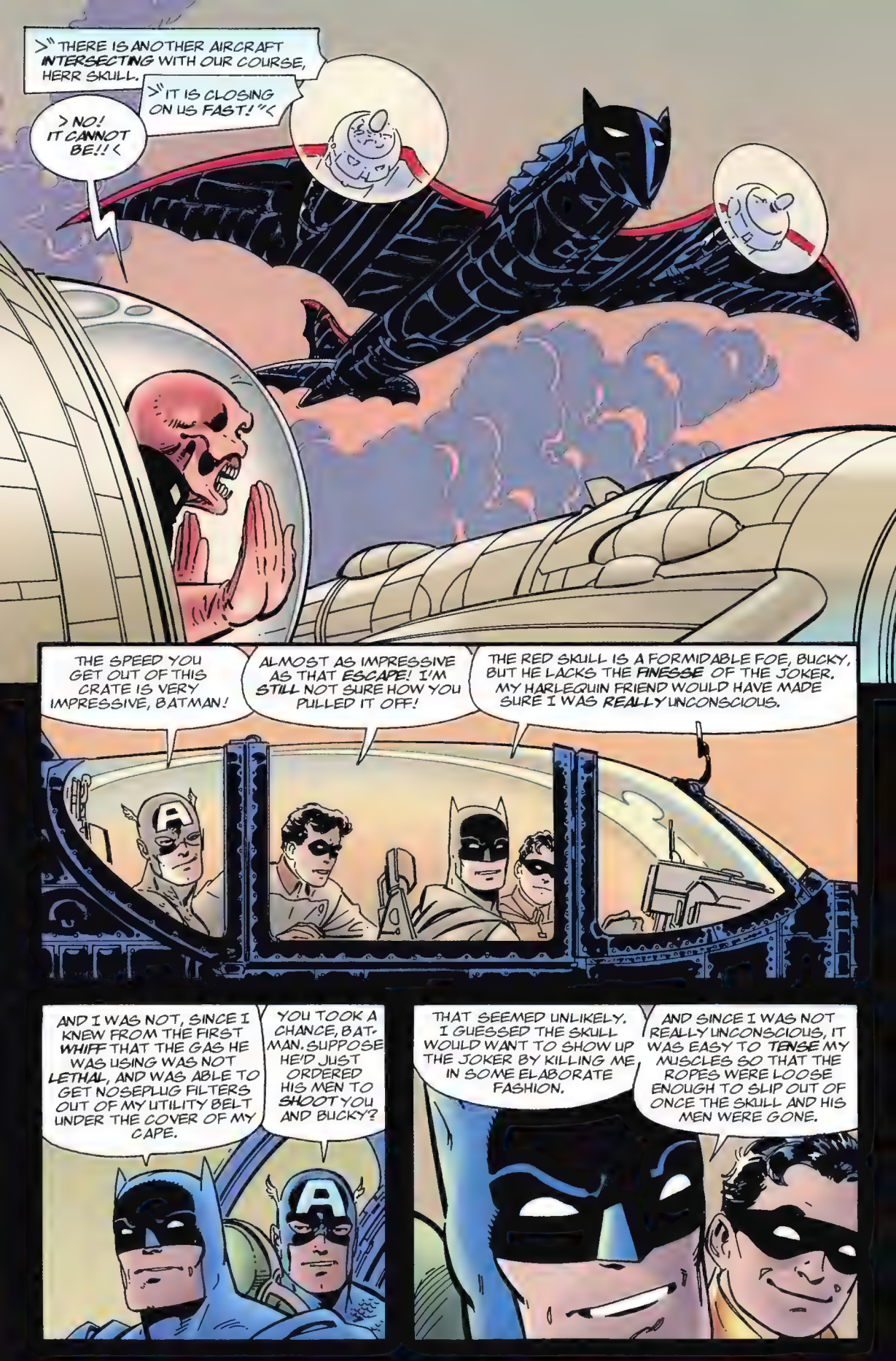

CUT THROUGH THE FENCE. HURRY!
I DO BELIEVE I HEAR OUR RIDE APPROACHING!
WE'RE THROUGH, BOSS!
HA HA HA

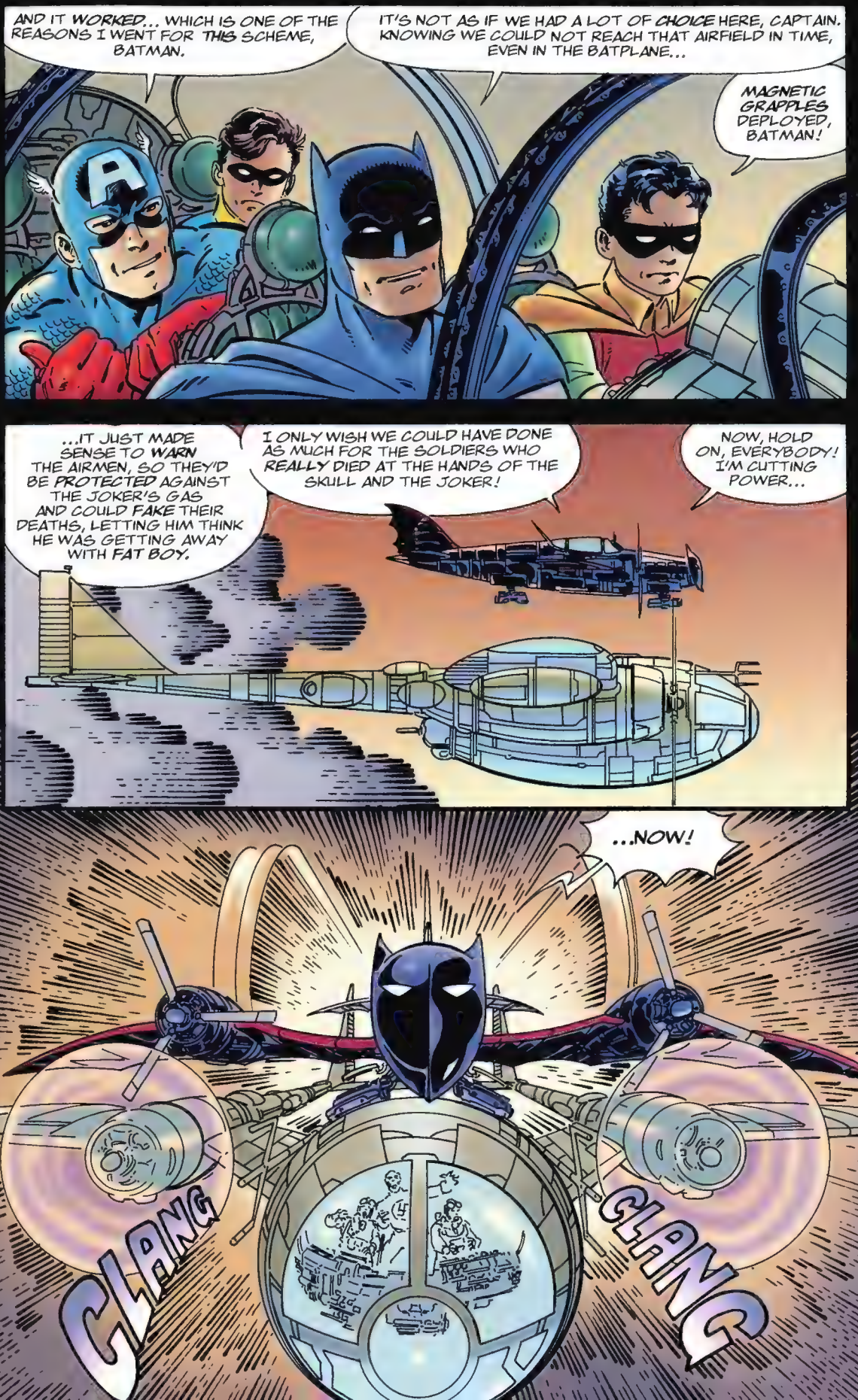
"ONE HUNDRED FOOLS DO NOT MAKE ONE WISE MAN..."
"...AND HEROISM DOES NOT COME FROM ONE HUNDRED COWARDS"
THAT IS THE CORRECT PASSWORD, JOKER.
AENTUNG
OF COURSE IT IS. TELL ME, DOES YOUR MYSTERIOUS EMPLOYER TRAIN ALL HIS PEOPLE TO USE THE SAME ARROGANT TONE?
THERE IS A FORKLIFT BY THE HANGAR, AS ANTICIPATED.
"GET IT, AND UNLOAD THE PRIZE PACKAGE."
UP
BE CAREFUL WITH THAT, YOU LOUT. WE DON'T WANT IT TO GET MAD AT US! AND WHERE IS YOUR BOSS, ANYWAY??
I AM RIGHT HERE, JOKER.

I COMMEND YOU FOR THE EFFICACY WITH WHICH YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED YOUR PART OF THIS MISSION.
THERE WERE SOME WHO FELT YOUR REPUTATION MADE YOU A BAD RISK.
AND JUST WHAT, EXACTLY, IS THE POINT OF THAT SUIT, FELLA?
YOU'RE A BIT LATE FOR HALLOWEEN...
YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET YOUR MILLION DOLLARS IN BLACKMAIL MONEY, OF COURSE, BUT THERE ARE REWARDS AWAITING YOU IN BERLIN THAT WILL MAKE A MILLION DOLLARS SEEM LIKE A PITTANCE.
ADOLF HITLER HIMSELF INTENDS TO AWARD YOU GERMANY'S HIGHEST HONORS!
YOU MEAN THAT'S NOT JUST SOME CRAZY DISGUISE??
I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH A NAZI?!?
BUT OF COURSE. WHY ARE YOU SO UPSET, JOKER?
FROM WHAT I HAVE READ OF YOUR EXPLOITS IT SEEMED OBVIOUS YOU WOULD MAKE A SUPERB NAZI!
THAT MASK MUST BE CUTTING OFF THE OXYGEN TO YOUR BRAIN.
I MAY BE A CRIMINAL LUNATIC, BUT I'M AN AMERICAN CRIMINAL LUNATIC!
KEEP BACK, BOYS! THIS CREEP IS MINE!
HOW UNFORTUNATE! SUCH MISPLACED PATRIOTISM.

AND NOW YOU DIE!!!
FOOSH!
BLAM
HAK KOFF KOFF KOFF hak
HAK HAK HAK
KOFF KOFF
HAK KOFF
MY JOKER VENOM! WHY AREN'T YOU DEAD??
BLAST! THE FORMULA OF MY DUST OF DEATH AND YOUR VENOM ARE TOO MUCH ALIKE!
AND WE ARE EACH IMMUNE TO OUR OWN WEAPONS!
I MUST RESORT TO LESS FLAMBOYANT METHODS!
WHA... UNGH!!

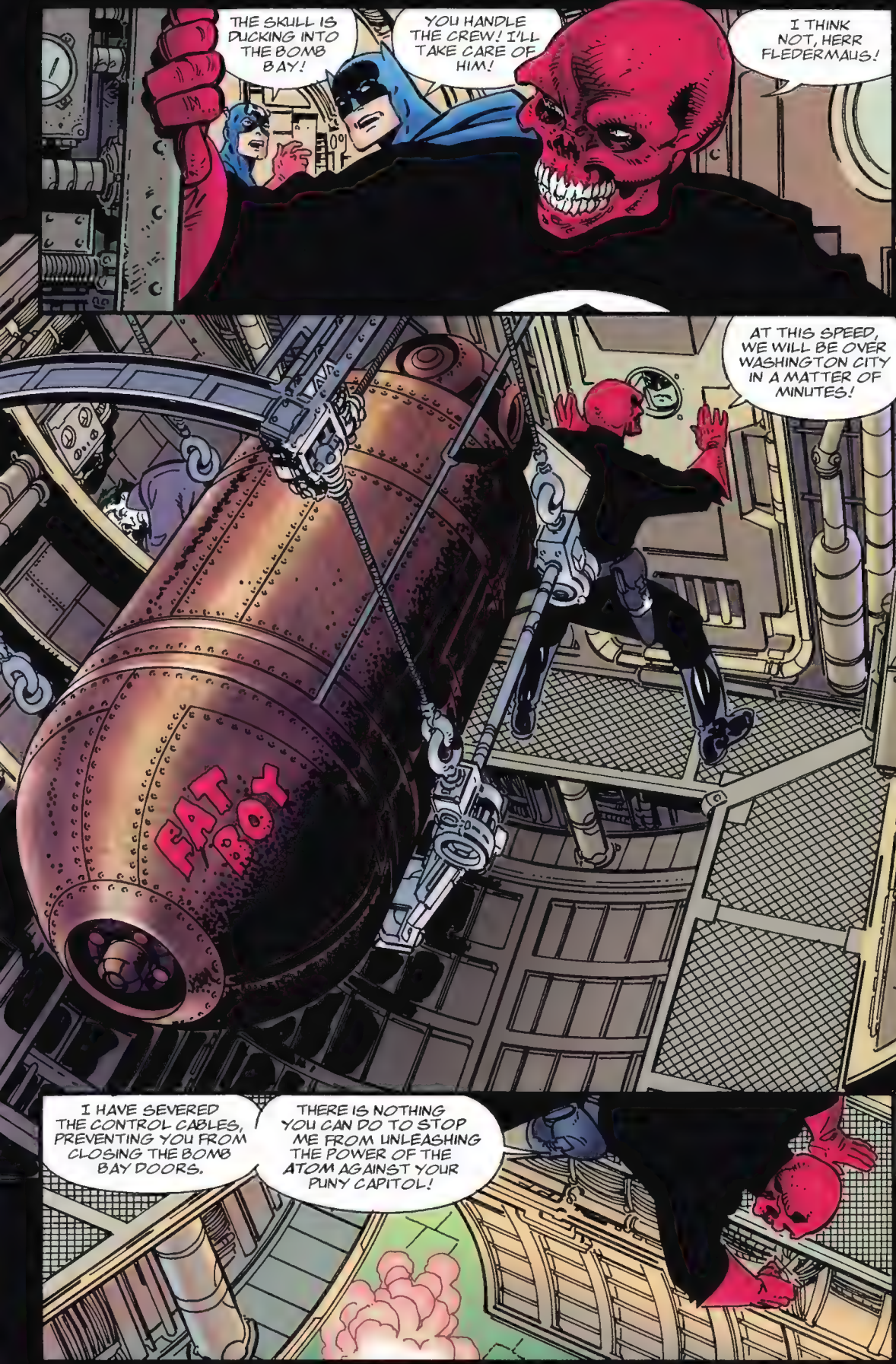
SHALL I FINISH HIM, HERR SKULL?
NO. HE WILL BE TAKEN TO BERLIN TO MEET THE FATE THAT WAS ALWAYS PLANNED FOR HIM--TO BE PARADED THROUGH THE STREETS AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF FREAKISH MONSTERS AMERICA HAS BRED!
QUICKLY, NOW! GET HIM STOWED ABOARD.
"THIS LITTLE PANTOMIME HAS COST US PRECIOUS MINUTES.
> FOLLOW THE FLIGHT PATH. OUR DESTINATION IS WASHINGTON, D.C.!<
JAWOHL!
M-MEIN HERR..!!


>" THERE IS ANOTHER AIRCRAFT INTERSECTING WITH OUR COURSE, HERR SKULL.
>" IT IS CLOSING ON US FAST!"<
> NO! IT CANNOT BE!! <
SO...
I DID!
THE SPEED YOU GET OUT OF THIS CRATE IS VERY IMPRESSIVE, BATMAN!
ALMOST AS IMPRESSIVE AS THAT ESCAPE! I'M STILL NOT SURE HOW YOU PULLED IT OFF!
THE RED SKULL IS A FORMIDABLE FOE, BUCKY, BUT HE LACKS THE FINESSE OF THE JOKER. MY HARLEQUIN FRIEND WOULD HAVE MADE SURE I WAS REALLY UNCONSCIOUS.
AND I WAS NOT, SINCE I KNEW FROM THE FIRST WHIFF THAT THE GAS HE WAS USING WAS NOT LETHAL, AND WAS ABLE TO GET NOSEPLUG FILTERS OUT OF MY UTILITY BELT UNDER THE COVER OF MY CAPE.
YOU TOOK A CHANCE, BATMAN. SUPPOSE HE'D JUST ORDERED HIS MEN TO SHOOT YOU AND BUCKY?
THAT SEEMED UNLIKELY. I GUESSED THE SKULL WOULD WANT TO SHOW UP THE JOKER BY KILLING ME IN SOME ELABORATE FASHION.
AND SINCE I WAS NOT REALLY UNCONSCIOUS, IT WAS EASY TO TENSE MY MUSCLES SO THAT THE ROPES WERE LOOSE ENOUGH TO SLIP OUT OF ONCE THE SKULL AND HIS MEN WERE GONE.


AND IT WORKED... WHICH IS ONE OF THE REASONS I WENT FOR THIS SCHEME, BATMAN.
IT'S NOT AS IF WE HAD A LOT OF CHOICE HERE, CAPTAIN. KNOWING WE COULD NOT REACH THAT AIRFIELD IN TIME, EVEN IN THE BATPLANE...
MAGNETIC GRAPPLES DEPLOYED, BATMAN!
...IT JUST MADE SENSE TO WARN THE AIRMEN, SO THEY'D BE PROTECTED AGAINST THE JOKER'S GAS AND COULD FAKE THEIR DEATHS, LETTING HIM THINK HE WAS GETTING AWAY WITH FAT BOY.
I ONLY WISH WE COULD HAVE DONE AS MUCH FOR THE SOLDIERS WHO REALLY DIED AT THE HANDS OF THE SKULL AND THE JOKER!
NOW, HOLD ON, EVERYBODY! I'M CUTTING POWER...
...NOW!
CLANG
CLANG

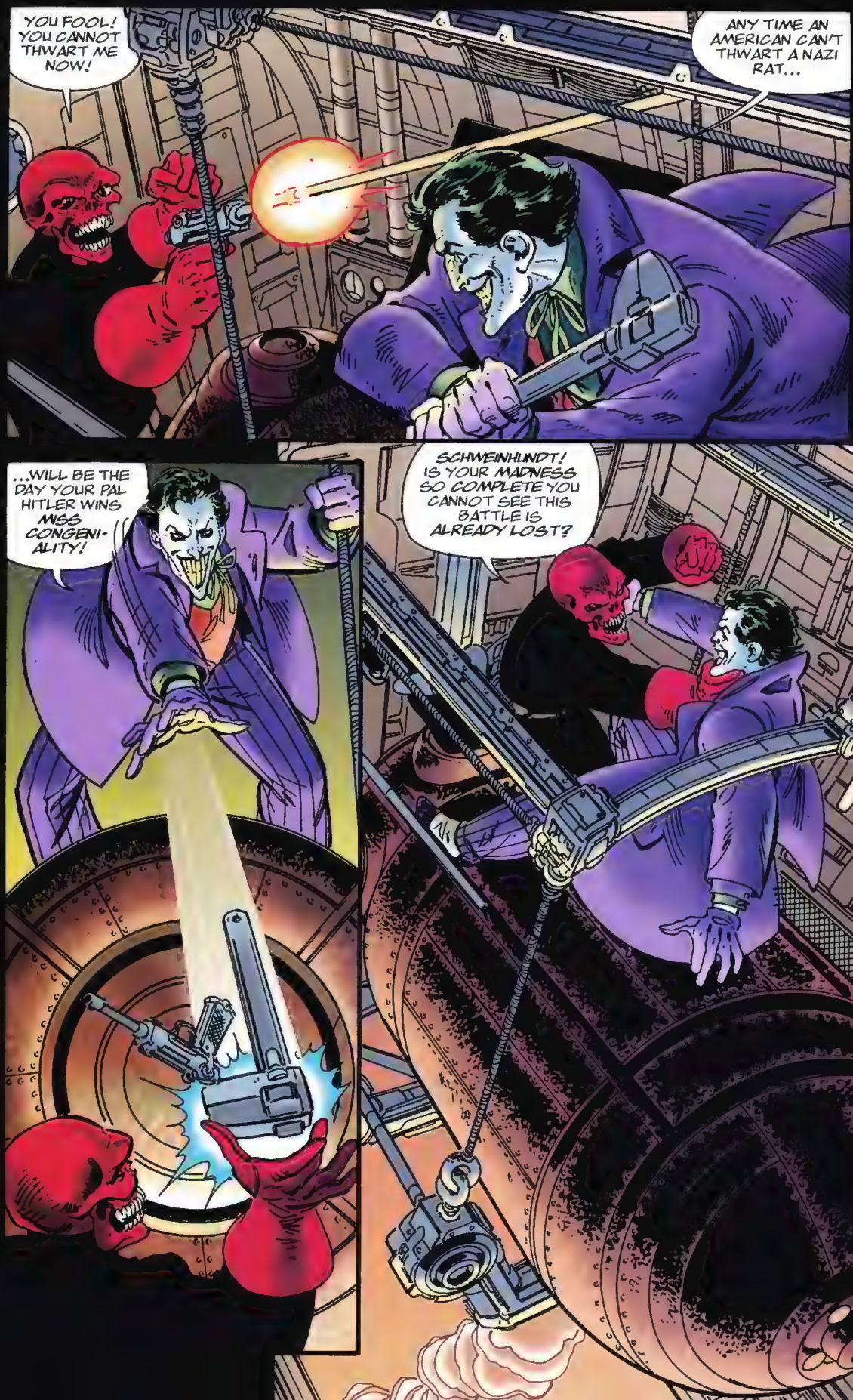
>THE JET ENGINES!<
>FIRE THEM NOW!<
"JAWOHL!!"
SHREEEEE
YIKE!!

THE BATPLANE!
ROBIN WILL HANDLE IT!
ROBIN! DO SOMETHING!
I AM, I AM!! COME ON, BABY! YOU CAN DO IT!
THESE BLINDIST TYPES ARE ALMOST A WASTE OF TIME AND ENERGY!
I'M AMAZED HITLER HAS LASTED AS LONG AS HE HAS, WITH THIS KIND OF SCUM SUPPORTING HIM!
SHE DID IT! WE ALMOST TORE THE WINGS OFF...
IT'S NOT SO MUCH THE QUALITY AS THE QUANTITY, BATMAN.
HE HAS A LOT OF SCUM SUPPORT!
BONG!
...BUT THE BATPLANE PULLED THROUGH!


THE SKULL IS DUCKING INTO THE BOMB BAY!
YOU HANDLE THE CREW! I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM!
I THINK NOT, HERR FLEDERMAUS!
AT THIS SPEED, WE WILL BE OVER WASHINGTON CITY IN A MATTER OF MINUTES!
FAT BOY
I HAVE SEVERED THE CONTROL CABLES, PREVENTING YOU FROM CLOSING THE BOMB BAY DOORS.
THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME FROM UNLEASHING THE POWER OF THE ATOM AGAINST YOUR PUNY CAPITOL!

SINCE THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAS CHOSEN TO KEEP THIS WEAPON A SECRET FROM THE PEOPLE, THEY WILL NATURALLY ASSUME IT IS SOME NAZI SUPER-BOMB.
THE RESULTANT DESTRUCTION WILL SO DEMORALIZE AMERICA THAT YOUR TROOPS WILL CRUMPLE BEFORE THE LAST, HEROIC SURGE OF THE ARMIES OF THE THIRD REICH!
I THINK NOT.
VAS IST LOS?!?
CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS GAINED AT LEAST PARTIAL CONTROL OF THIS PLANE, SKULL! HE'S DIRECTING US OUT TO SEA, AWAY FROM WASHINGTON!

YOU HAVE STILL LOST, HERR FLEDERMAUS. THIS BOMB WILL CONTAMINATE EVERYTHING WITHIN FIFTY MILES OF GROUND ZERO.
IF I UNLEASH IT NOW, WASHINGTON WILL STILL BE...
...EH??
THIS LITTLE FIRECRACKER ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE, SMILEY.
I'M GONNA SMASH THE MECHANISM THAT LOWERS THE BOMB FOR DROPPING!
CLANG
JOKER!!


YOU FOOL! YOU CANNOT THWART ME NOW!
ANY TIME AN AMERICAN CAN'T THWART A NAZI RAT...
...WILL BE THE DAY YOUR PAL HITLER WINS MISS CONGENIALITY!
SCHWEINHUNDT! IS YOUR MADNESS SO COMPLETE YOU CANNOT SEE THIS BATTLE IS ALREADY LOST?

YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN A CRIMINAL CLOWN, JOKER!
WHILE I WAS TRAINED BY THE FÜHRER HIMSELF TO BE GERMANY'S GREATEST WARRIOR!
YEAH? WELL I ALWAYS BUY AMERICAN, MYSELF!
NOW GIVE UP, SKULL, AND MAYBE I'LL LET BATMAN PUT YOU IN A NICE, COZY CELL FOR THE REST OF THE WAR!
NEVER! I WILL...
ACH! NEIN!!
FAT BOY

CAPTAIN... WE HAVE A PROBLEM...
MAYBE NOT.
THE INCREDIBLE SPEED OF THIS NAZI WARBIRD HAS CARRIED US WAY OUT OVER THE ATLANTIC...
...BUT THE SHEER FORCE OF THOSE JETS MAKES THE PLANE WANT TO GO IN A STRAIGHT LINE...
...AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO RIGHT NOW IS CLIMB!
LET ME HELP...
FEELS LIKE THIS JOYSTICK IS STARTING TO BEND!
BUT... THE NOSE IS RISING! ONLY A LITTLE, BUT...
WE DID IT!
AND JUST IN TIME!

HANG ON, BATMAN! AND PRAY THE ENGINEERING SKILLS OF THE THIRD REICH ARE ALL THEY'RE CRACKED UP TO BE!
SHE'S LEVELING OUT. I THINK WE'RE OKAY.
YES... CONTROL SURFACES ARE ANSWERING.
I CAN HANDLE HER ALONE, NOW, BATMAN.
>CRACKLE< ...DO YOU READ..? >CRACKLE<
REPEAT, THIS IS ROBIN AND BUCKY CALLING ON ALL FREQUENCIES. BATMAN, DO YOU READ?
LOUD AND CLEAR, OLD CHUM. WHERE ARE YOU?
WE'RE ON A ROAD ABOUT THREE MILES OUTSIDE WASHINGTON. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE BEST TO LAND THE BATPLANE, AFTER WHAT SHE'D BEEN THROUGH!
BUT WHERE ARE YOU GUYS? AND WHAT WAS THAT HELLACIOUS LIGHT?

THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE, BUCKY. A WONDROUS, TERRIBLE NEW AGE.
BUT AT LEAST WE'VE SEEN THE LAST OF THE JOKER AND THE RED SKULL!
YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT, DO YOU?
NO, CAPTAIN. I'M AFRAID I DON'T...

EPILOGUE:
THE NORTH ATLANTIC, TWENTY YEARS LATER.
LOOKS LIKE JOKER JR. HAS GIVEN US THE SLIP THIS TIME, BRUCE.
I'M AFRAID YOU'RE RIGHT, DICK.
BUT...
WHAT IS IT, BRUCE?
SONAR IS PICKING UP A WEIRD CAVITATION IN THAT ICE FLOE DEAD AHEAD.
IT... ALMOST READS LIKE SOMETHING BIOLOGICAL TRAPPED IN THE ICE!
COULD BE A LITTLE SURPRISE JOKER JR. LEFT FOR US.
LET'S PLAY ALONG FOR A BIT--BUT BE READY FOR ANYTHING.
IT'S A MAN, ALL RIGHT...
DICK... ACCORDING TO THESE READINGS HE'S STILL ALIVE..!!
HE'S MORE THAN THAT! LOOK!!
IT CAN'T BE!

AND YET... IT MUST BE! THE SHIELD... THIS MASK WITH THE PROUD LETTER A UPON IT!
DICK! HE'S COMING 'ROUND!!
BUCKY! NO!!!
CAP! NO! EASY!
YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS!
WHA... BATMAN? AND... ROBIN?
YES AND NO, CAPTAIN. I'M DICK GRAYSON. I TOOK OVER WHEN BRUCE RETIRED A FEW YEARS BACK.
AND I'M BRUCE WAYNE JR., THE SON OF THE ORIGINAL BATMAN.
...AND THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY, AS NEAR AS WE CAN FIGURE IT, CAP. YOU DISAPPEARED JUST BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR.
SOMEHOW, YOU MUST HAVE BEEN FROZEN IN THAT ICE SINCE THEN!
IT'S... INCREDIBLE!
IT'S MORE THAN THAT, SIR, IF I MAY BE SO BOLD.
IT IS PROVIDENCE, MASTER STEVEN, THAT YOU SHOULD BE RETURNED TO US NOW.
JUST WHEN THE WORLD HAS NEED OF SUCH A MAN AS YOU!
HEAR HEAR!
WELCOME BACK, CAPTAIN AMERICA!
SPECIAL THANKS TO RASCALLY ROGER STERN FOR SUGGESTING THIS EPILOGUE -- J.B.

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